

SERMONS

On Several IMPORTANT

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

By the late Reverend and Learned

JOSEPH HOOLE, M.A.

Rector of St. ANN's, in *Manchester*.

VOL. II.



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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL IMPORTANT

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

BY THE REV. JOHN H. HOLLIS, M.A.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN A SERMON DELIVERED AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE, ON THE 14TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1841.



ON THE HOLY GHOST.

MATTHEW xii. 31, 32.

Whosoever shall say unto man, Thou art a heathen, or a demon, he shall not be forgiven him in this age, nor in the age to come.

But whosoever shall say, Thou art a son of man, he shall be forgiven him in this age, and in the age to come.

And when ye stand against the Holy Ghost, ye cannot be forgiven: ye do so continually.

And ye shall stand against him, saying, Thou art a heathen, or a demon, and shalt not be forgiven.

And ye shall stand against him, saying, Thou art a son of man, and shalt be forgiven.

And ye shall stand against him, saying, Thou art a heathen, or a demon, and shalt not be forgiven.

And ye shall stand against him, saying, Thou art a son of man, and shalt be forgiven.

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And ye shall stand against him, saying, Thou art a son of man, and shalt be forgiven.

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And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

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S E R M O N I.

MATTHEW xii. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men.

And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

AFTER the consideration of sins of ignorance, infirmity and presumption, which have been the subject of my three last discourses, it may not be improper to turn our thoughts upon this

passage of Scripture ; which, as on one hand, it has given occasion to the fears and uneasiness of some persons, of serious and melancholy tempers ; so, on the other hand, it has been treated with contempt and raillery, by men of a wanton and profane turn of mind. And as it is seldom considered in publick discourses, it is to be feared that most people are ignorant of its true design and meaning.

Now that we may the better understand it, and perceive what use we ought to make of it, let us consider the context, and inquire what this Blasphemy against the Spirit, or Speaking against the Holy Ghost, is; and upon what account this dreadful sentence is passed upon it. We find in the 22^d verse, that one was brought to our LORD *possessed with a devil, blind and dumb : And he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. At which the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David ? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* The meanness of his birth and education gave them contemptible thoughts of him ;

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him; and since he opposed those amongst them that cast out devils, by invoking the true GOD, they thought that what he did must either be mere trick and collusion; or, if he really cast out devils, he must do it by some compact with the devil himself.

But to obviate these slanderous imputations, our Saviour refers to common sense and reason to consider, whether it was likely, that the devils should be in a confederacy with *him*, whose principal business it was to destroy their works. He appeals to those amongst them that also cast out devils, to judge, whether he should do the same things with them by an opposite power; they, by the invocation of the most high GOD; he, by the assistance of the devil.

If therefore they persisted in such opinions and censures, it would be an argument of their unreasonable prejudice, or downright malice; but if, upon a more impartial consideration of things, they formed better judgments, and discovered that he cast out devils by the Spirit of GOD, then they might conclude, that he really was what he professed himself to be, the promised Messiah, who was going to set up the king-

6 *Of the Sin against* Ser. 1.

dom spoken of by the prophets, both opposite and superior to the kingdom of *Satan*. *For how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his goods.* Now since he was spoiling principalities, and the powers of darkness, by the miracles that he wrought, How could he be confederate with them? *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad:* And therefore if it manifestly appeared, as it did, that he was not in the same interest with the devil, he was against him; and if he gathered not subjects into his kingdom, as they must confess he did not, he must be engaged against it, and endeavouring to subvert and destroy it.

Having thus cleared himself from an ill-grounded and malicious aspersi^on, he leaves this caution with them; That they should beware of blaspheming the Spirit, and speaking evil against the Holy Ghost, and his extraordinary powers, which they should ere long observe. For although this contempt which they had thrown upon himself, might be pardoned upon their conviction of it, and
repent-

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repentance for it; yet if they hardened themselves against the testimony of the Holy Ghost, when he should be sent to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment, their case would then be desperate and incurable; they would be given up to their wilful blindness and obstinacy; and their eternal perdition would be certain and inevitable.

The words being thus opened, let us consider more expressly,

I. What is here understood by the Spirit, or Holy Ghost.

II. What this Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or Spirit, is.

III. On what account this comes to be an unpardonable sin.

I. Let us inquire what we are to understand by the Spirit, and what by the Holy Ghost. For, whatever is the reason of it, we find them distinguished, at least as to the name, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the original of this text. These terms are both frequently intended to signify the Third person in the Sacred Trinity, and also the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit, either common or miraculous; but with this

difference, according to the observation of some of our great divines, That the word Spirit is used to signify the *outward*, and the words Holy Ghost to denote the *inward* operations of the same Divine Person.

II. As to the meaning of this blasphemy against the Spirit, or speaking against the Holy Ghost, I would not be too bold or positive in determining upon it, because very learned and worthy divines, who of late years seem to have well considered it, have given somewhat different accounts of it: and as I am not aware of any ill consequences that follow either of them; as both one and the other of them are agreeable to the analogy of faith; as either of them will vindicate this passage from contempt; as either of them will serve to satisfy the doubts and fears of weak minds; and neither of them will give the least encouragement or occasion to those that are disposed to burlesque the Scriptures, and expose things sacred to scorn or ridicule; I choose, as briefly as may be, to lay them before you, and leave it to your own judgment, to prefer one or another, as it shall appear most reasonable.

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The former of these is the account that archbishop *Tillotson* has given of this Blasphemy, which seems above others to have satisfied one of his successors in that see, a late learned and most worthy divine, who, if any other, has deserved well of our Church, and our common Christianity; and the substance of it is this: They have observed that this Blasphemy is one of the sins of the tongue, because it is called *speaking* evil of the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, by which our Saviour performed his miracles; and that those roving, or, as they are called, blasphemous thoughts, with which many serious persons are haunted and disturbed, are a very different thing from the Blasphemy, into the nature of which we are now inquiring: nay, that the atheism and infidelity of either the former or the present times, is not so flagrant a sin as was this, which our LORD pronounces unpardonable: That *grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit, refusing to hearken to his call and counsel*, does not amount to this Blasphemy: That *resisting or opposing him with a high hand*, was not this Slander or Blasphemy: That *vilifying his operations as the effects of drunken-*

drunkenness, out of ignorance or weakness, rather than spite or malice, was not this sin, upon which our Saviour denounces this sentence: That the sin of *Simon Magus*, which was attended with a great admiration of the powers and gifts of the Holy Ghost, was not this Blasphemy, or defamation of the Holy Spirit. They have observed, That this Blasphemy does not consist either in final impenitency, or total apostasy, though they be as much or more unpardonable than this Blasphemy is: That every sin after baptism is not this unpardonable sin: That every malicious opposition of gospel truths is not the sin here intended; for Infidelity and Blasphemy are quite different sins: And finally, That this sin is not to be placed in holding out wilfully and obstinately against the last dispensation which commenced at our Saviour's ascension; though this opinion is allowed to have met with very considerable defenders. Upon the whole, they conclude, That this Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost consisted in ascribing the miracles wrought by our LORD to the devil: and that the *Pharisees* in this chapter had committed this very sin; which was therefore

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fore so heinous, as it was a most wicked and impudent slander, wilfully and presumptuously committed, against CHRIST and his Religion; spitefully defaming those works which they would have ascribed to the power of GOD, had they not been wrought to confirm the Religion of CHRIST, which they most maliciously opposed.

This is the account which these great men have given of this matter.

The other, which is allowed to be plausible, and to be espoused by very considerable divines, is this that follows: They observe, that our LORD has not said, that every sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable; for there are many sins against the Holy Ghost, that upon true repentance may be forgiven. Every sin against GOD as GOD, is also a sin against the Holy Ghost, because He is GOD: But yet, forgiveness may be had for very great affronts, and dishonours, that are offered to the great GOD; provided men be sensible of them, sorry for them, acknowledge them as the case requires, beg of GOD to forgive them, and not only avoid them for the future, but make such amends and satisfaction for them, as in prudence

dence and good conscience they may conclude to be just and necessary. Those sins that are committed against the common gifts and graces, fruits of the Spirit, are sins against Him, but yet are pardonable upon sincere repentance. And therefore, although men sin against this Holy Spirit, when they trespass against the rules of peace and charity, patience and long-suffering, meekness or modesty, temperance or sobriety, continence or chastity; yet they do not despair of pardon, when they are satisfied of their true sorrow for, and sincere repentance of them.

Nay, to speak against the extraordinary operations of the Spirit, is not in general, and absolutely, to be pronounced unpardonable, nor further than our Saviour has determined concerning it. For although the *Pharisees* in this chapter had been guilty of Blasphemy, in speaking reproachfully of CHRIST, and the miracles which he wrought by the Spirit of GOD; yet we do not find, that our Saviour expressly says, that they were guilty of this unpardonable sin; but rather takes this occasion to warn them against blaspheming the Spirit, and speaking against the Holy Ghost, after his plentiful

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gifts should be conferred upon Christians, and Believers should receive those abundant effusions of his graces and powers, that were to be shed upon the Church after his own ascension into Heaven. *For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* It must be granted, this sin of the *Pharisees* was of a very heinous nature; it was undoubtedly damnable without repentance, and a sin not easy to be repented of; and perhaps they never did repent of it, and are now suffering the punishment that is justly inflicted upon them for it: but it is not plain from any thing that CHRIST says about it, that this was the sin that was never to be forgiven. Nay, they further observe from the case of *Simon Magus*, that some sins against the greatest powers and gifts of the Holy Ghost, after he was sent upon the Apostles at *Pentecost*, are yet such as may be repented of, and forgiven. This *Simon* was a magician, who by sorcery and witchcraft had imposed upon the people of *Samaria*, and fooled them all from the least to the greatest, with an opinion of his being the Great Power of GOD. And yet, upon the preaching of St. *Philip*, both they and he

he believed, and were baptized. This *Simon* continued with the Evangelist, and was amazed to see the wonderful works that were done by the Apostles. But that which took most with him, was, the giving of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of the Apostles hands. Which when he observed, he offered them money, saying, *Give me also this Power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.*

Now this was a very great reflection upon the Religion of CHRIST, and upon the persons of the Apostles, who were the stewards of the mysteries of GOD, the visible ministers under CHRIST and the Blessed Spirit; as if they were so mercenary and knavish, as to pretend to expose to sale the precious and free gifts of the Holy Ghost. He likewise threw a very great contempt upon the Holy Ghost, forasmuch as he compared him, and his blessed gifts, and extraordinary powers, to such things as might be bought and sold for money. This was such an outrageous affront to Heaven, as proved him to be such a stupid and worldly wretch, as truly worshipped no other GOD than money.

And

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And yet the Apostles do not pass an irreversible sentence upon him: but *Peter* said unto him, *Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought, that the gift of GOD may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of GOD.* But yet he seems to hope, that he might repent, and be pardoned; for thus he goes on, *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray GOD, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive, that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* They did not look upon him, after all this, to be in a hopeless and desperate condition, although he was in very great danger: and himself seems sensible of it in the following verse; for he desires them to pray to the LORD for him, that none of the things that they had spoken of might come upon him. So that this, it seems, great and flagrant as it was, did not yet amount to that sin for which there is no forgiveness.

But the sin which our LORD says will never be forgiven, is, the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and Speaking against the Holy

Holy Ghost ; that is, the Speaking so reproachfully against Him, and his extraordinary gifts and powers, when he should be sent into the world, and endow Believers with them, as they had been speaking against CHRIST, and his miracles. Which, though it must be esteemed a very great affront to GOD, as GOD, and to his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, that first contrived man's redemption, and then entered upon proper measures to bring about the conversion and salvation of the world ; yet, by way of distinction and eminence, it is, and is to be called, a Blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost*, forasmuch as it is an immediate slight and contempt of those miraculous powers and gifts which were derived from him, and which by his office he was to dispense in the church.

But if neither the *Pharisees*, to whom our Saviour gave the caution in the text, nor *Simon Magus*, who has in all ages been branded for a sin that the Church has passed the severest censures upon, were guilty of this sin that is here pronounced unpardonable ; How can we say, that it ever was

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committed, or who can we imagine to be chargeable with it?

Now, although we should not take upon ourselves to pass such a dreadful sentence as this, upon either any people or persons, without the plainest evidence; yet without any breach of charity we may conclude, That both *Jews* and *Gentiles* who saw the miracles that the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to work, and had the fullest testimony that GOD thought fit to give them, of the Divinity of the Person and Religion of our Saviour, but yet obstinately and frowardly withstood all this evidence, rejected the counsel of GOD against themselves, and would not receive the Gospel, and submit to the terms of salvation, as appointed by our Redeemer; and those who, although they did at first, and for a time, believe, yet in time of temptation fell away, and finally apostatized from Christianity, and returned to their former idolatry or infidelity; as they slighted and rejected GOD's last offers, and hardened themselves against repentance or conviction, and persecuted and murdered the preachers of the Gospel, which great numbers concurred in doing, both in the times of the

Apostles, and those that followed ; these persons were undoubtedly guilty of this unpardonable sin. For their case and character, without any abatement, comes intirely up to what is said of it, in this, and other passages of the Holy Scripture. This, soon after our Saviour's ascension, became a common and flagrant sin ; which being foreseen by our LORD, he warned them of it in such strong and decisive terms, as either to prevent it, or render *them* entirely inexcusable, that, after this, should fall into it.

And to bring the matter home to ourselves, and shew who they are that are guilty of, or make the greatest approaches to this sin, in the present times ; not to insist upon a stupid habitual and confirmed indolence about their souls, and the concerns of another state after this life, which yet is a case of the utmost danger, and what we observe in multitudes every day ; the sin that we are now treating of, seems to import something more, and implies an habitual and wanton, active and malicious opposition to the instituted and established method of salvation ; such as denying revelation, burlesquing the Holy Scriptures, running down
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the institutions of Heaven, making a jest of publick prayer and sermons, depreciating the sacraments, a contemptuous neglect of the means of knowledge and grace, and exposing the administration of them, as the acts of priestcraft, ridiculing the mysteries of Christianity, drawing profane parallels betwixt them and the religious rites of the heathen, vilifying the sufferings and death, the sacrifice and satisfaction of our Saviour, sneering at the articles of the Holy Catholick Church, and the Communion of Saints, scoffing at the doctrine of the Trinity, laughing at the notions of a future Judgment, and the Rewards and Punishments of another state, making a mock at sin, going on in a profane course of life, proceeding from bad to worse, from one degree and kind of wickedness to another, hardening themselves against all admonitions, till they are past feeling, laughing at their reprovers, and sinning out of pure spite and malice.

These are characters most likely to be charged with this sin in these times; these are persons, who, although we dare not at any time in this life pronounce to be desperate, and deserted by the Spirit of God, and

given up to the power of the devil ; yet are they at present most certainly *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity* ; and without timely reformation and amendment, are likely to find at last, that as they have rejected their Redeemer, he will not be their Advocate and Intercessor ; but as soon as they leave this world, will sink into inconceivable misery and sorrow in another.

I should now proceed to shew upon what account such a dreadful sentence is passed upon this sin ; and to make some practical reflections upon the whole ; but these articles would draw out this discourse to too great a length, and will supply us with matter for another.

Now to GOD, &c.

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SERMON II.

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S E R M O N II.

MATTHEW xii. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men.

And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

IT is the great happiness of the more obscure and unpolite parts of the world, to be ignorant, as of the modes and fashions, so of the principles and vices, that are but too common in places of a more distinguished

situation; to stand clear of that infection of infidelity, that spreads itself amongst those of little learning, and great levity, and by which they are careful to distinguish themselves from those of a more composed behaviour, who think it no reproach to be reputed Christians. Amongst those that move in the superior stations of life, we find too many that affect to be thought so curious and inquisitive, as not to submit to the most evident truths without demonstration. The Being and Providence of a G O D, the immortality of the soul, the natural differences of moral good and evil, and many other articles that are received by all reasonable and serious persons, in the civilized parts of the world, will scarce go down with persons of this profane turn, without, nay, sometimes not with, the most evident proof and demonstration, that things of this nature are capable of.

No wonder then if the divine authority of the Scriptures, the Divinity of the Son of G O D and the Holy Spirit, the positive parts of our Religion, and the whole method of our salvation, as it is instituted by our Redeemer, be rejected and discredited by

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by them. When they are told of the promises of God to encourage their obedience, it passes with them like a golden legend, invented by men of artifice and design, to draw people of little thought, and great credulity, into schemes that the inventors of them find their accounts in. And if they are told of the divine threats that should deter them from sin, they look upon it as a scarecrow, to fright simple and well-meaning people; but they have more sense than to believe a word of it, till they fall into it, and its dreadful flames and tortures kindle upon them, and put their scorn and laughter quite out of date.

Where this kind of vanity appears, it is necessary to secure the very foundations of Religion. But in places where these sacred truths are not disputed or disbelieved, but received and credited upon the evidence that attends them; we have no more to do than to pursue them in their just consequences, and bring from thence the most powerful motives to a religious and good life. The argument that I am now to discourse upon, is one of those which is treated with mirth and ridicule, by such who are so far from

from looking upon any thing to be unpardonable, that they have no notion of being accountable. But the nature and reality of things depend not upon their notions. Whatever they may think of the matter, we shall find things at last as the sacred Scriptures represent them. These scoffers I endeavoured formerly to convince of their folly, by vindicating the subject from that contempt and raillery with which they affect to treat it. But as, on the one hand, there are some of this ludicrous disposition, who scoff at this text; so there are others, of serious and melancholy tempers, that find it the occasion of many fears, and much uneasiness; entertaining strong imaginations of having brought themselves into the most desperate state, of being consigned to that death which will be eternal, by committing the sin which our Saviour has in this place pronounced unpardonable; some concluding that all wilful and presumptuous sins, committed against the knowledge and sense of their own minds, and the convictions and remonstrances of their conscience, come under this class; and others, that such horrid and blasphemous thoughts, as too often possess

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sefs their minds, are such unpardonable Blasphemies as those against which our Saviour is here cautioning the *Pharisees*, and from which to deter them, has assured them, that there is no forgiveness for them. Now, as to these, it is rather the misfortune of their constitutions, than any wickedness of their hearts, to which they are to be imputed; and they are so far from being unpardonable sins against the Holy Ghost, that they are no sins at all, as far as they are not voluntary, but are the constant grief and trouble of those that are haunted and disturbed with them. And, as to the other, although it must be confessed, that wilful and presumptuous sins are really in their own nature damnable; yet from the case of *David* and *St. Peter* it appears, that upon sorrow for them, repentance of them, and the best amends they are able to make to Heaven and Earth for them, they are also pardonable.

In my former discourse I observed, That by the Holy Ghost we are to understand, the Third Person in the blessed Trinity, and the miraculous operations of that Spirit. And by Blasphemy against Him is to be understood,

stood, either such a malicious opposition as that which the *Pharisees* made to our Saviour, and casting such impious slanders upon him, as those of ascribing his miraculous works, by which the power of Heaven was demonstrated, to the powers of darkness, the prince of the devils; or afterwards speaking so reproachfully and spitefully against the Spirit, and His extraordinary gifts and powers, when He was sent into the world to be CHRIST's advocate, that it argued a contempt of the power of miracles, the gift of tongues, and other illuminations, of which the Apostles and first Christians were made partakers, at and after the *Pentecost*: and not only a despising of them, but a vilifying and reviling them, as if it were possible for evil spirits to effect them for wicked purposes; and so rejecting the greatest evidence of the truth of CHRIST's Religion, and the last offers of grace and salvation.—

Now after this account of the nature of this Sin, or Blasphemy, it is easy to perceive,

III, How it comes to be unpardonable. And it is not so because the Holy Ghost is more worthy in his nature than either the Father or the Son. For the Godhead of the
Father,

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Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one ; the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. In this sacred Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another ; but the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. But it is not to be forgiven, because it is the greatest affront that can be offered to Heaven. Both the Father and Son, as well as the Holy Ghost, are dishonoured by this Blasphemy. It is the greatest contempt and disparagement that can be thrown upon the methods, which infinite Wisdom and Goodness thought fit to take, in order to reform and save mankind. And yet this is not all ; every dishonour of GOD is damnable in its own nature, even the smallest affront that dust and ashes can offer to the LORD of the universe. But this blaspheming and reproaching the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, and despising and slighting, disdain and rejecting his last offers, is a sin of so heinous and provoking a nature, that when wicked men are arrived at it, GOD will give them up, and strive no longer with them. He had still some further

ther overtures to make, when all the former were slighted; and though one method was ineffectual, another might prove successful: however, till the last had been tried, G O D had a kind reserve, and would not give up mankind as hopeless and desperate. If his ordinary dispensations did not prevent a general corruption, the confusion of languages, and the dispersion that followed it, might introduce good laws, reform their manners, and effectually convince mankind of the Being, and Power, and Providence of G O D; and dispose them to those duties that reason itself would infer, from the state, and conditions, and relations they were under: when the Covenant of *Works* was broken, G O D was pleased to enter into a Covenant of *Grace*: when men had violated the *Law of Nature*, *Revelation* brought a remedy in the sacrifices that were of Divine institution: if the precepts and precedents of the *Patriarchs* had not their due influence upon the world, the preaching of *Noah* might come to reform them: if the severities of the deluge did not suitably affect them, the following dispensations of his long-suffering and kindness might lay more powerful engagements upon

upon them: if his common care and providence, that he extended to all the nations of the earth, made not suitable impressions upon the minds of men; the peculiar care that he took of his people, whom he had chosen to himself out of all the world, the wonders that were wrought for them in *Egypt*, and at the *Red-sea*, the law that was delivered to them from Heaven, the providences that attended them in the wilderness, the success and prosperity that followed their arms and enterprizes when they were obedient, the distress that overtook them when they deserted their GOD and Governor, might serve to awaken the sense of his Being and Attributes, and bring serious and thinking people from their heathenish idolatry, to worship the GOD of *Israel*, who far surpassed all other gods that ever were heard of. Whilst they inhabited the land of *Canaan*, their Religion was very much confined to their own body; their dispersions amongst the nations, and their captivity in *Babylon*, must spread the knowlege of the one supreme GOD, the GOD of *Daniel*, the GOD of *Ananias*, *Azarias*, and *Misael*, the GOD of *Israel*, the GOD of gods, through all the

the empires of the world : if the constant worship and religious services of GOD's people were not sufficient to keep them within their bounds, the Prophets that were raised up amongst them, would be perpetual monitors to them : if one Prophet returned with complaints of their contempt and disobedience, another peradventure might find them in, or bring them to, a better temper : but as the servants were all treated with indignity, the Son might meet with more respect : if neither the messengers that came from Heaven to foretel his conception, nor the notification of his birth by the angel to the shepherds, nor the multitude of the heavenly host, that praised GOD, and said, *Glory to GOD in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men* ; if neither the star that appeared upon his nativity, nor the arrival of the eastern sages by its direction, to make their offerings and adorations to him, could raise mens expectations, and induce them to acknowledge and receive *him*, that was ushered into the world with so much solemnity ; yet when GOD appeared in human nature, and the Ancient of Days was actually come down to converse with mortals ;
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when He that from eternity had lived in Heaven, came to keep his residence here on earth; when He appeared who was Omniscient, could search the hearts, and discover the most retired and hidden thoughts of man, was perfectly acquainted with all the springs of our nature, and could tell what were the most proper things to be spoke to mankind upon any occasion; He might probably engage their attention, and lay hold upon their hearts and affections. If his excellent sermons should not convince and persuade, yet his innocent and unspotted life might engage and charm; and if still they were proof against *this*, yet they would not perhaps stand it out against his *works*: when the blind received their sight, and the lame were restored to their limbs; when raging winds and waves were hushed and stilled by a word; when the devils fled before him, and at his command left the bodies they had possessed; when they daily saw such miracles as these done before their eyes, and in the face of the world, it was yet more likely they should confess, that the mighty Power of God attended him. But if all that the Son of God in person could say and do,

was still in vain, the unsearchable Wisdom and Goodness of GOD had yet one further remedy in store. He had the Holy Ghost to send to be CHRIST's advocate, to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment; and this by such mighty and wonderful works as were never heard of in the world before; the particulars of which we read in 1 C^{OR}. xii. *To one he gave the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.*

How difficult soever it may be to appropriate the true sense to each of these particular gifts, certain it is, that the powers bestowed upon the first preachers of the Word, and many of the first Christians, were very surprising, various, and useful.---They were enabled to reveal to the world the great doctrines and mysteries of redemption, and the methods of salvation fixed and established by the Son of GOD. They could interpret the Holy Scriptures, and compose prayers, and hymns, and psalms, by inspiration.

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ration. They could tell what was done in distant places, and what should be done in future times. They were enabled to discern spirits, to discover who were only bare pretenders to, or who were sincere professors of Christianity, and who were fit or unfit to be taken into the sacred ministry. They were inspired with divers kinds of tongues, which they were never taught by rules or conversation; and could interpret and explain what was delivered by inspired persons to others, that did not understand the languages in which they expressed themselves. They were enabled to work various kinds of miracles, and to discover upon what occasions they should be assisted so to do. They cast out devils, gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, soundness to the lame, strength to the weak, and life to the dead. And when there was occasion for it, they could inflict bodily punishments, and death itself, upon scandalous and incorrigible professors, and wicked and malicious opposers of Christianity. And under all the terrible persecutions and cruel torments to which they were exposed, they were inspired with such supernatural courage and

constancy, as made their behaviour amazing to all that observed them.

Now all these were the effects of the Holy Ghost, and yet He was by many as contemptuously treated as the Son of God had been: all these mighty works, these extraordinary gifts and powers upon Believers, were exposed, reviled, slandered, and blasphemed, by being attributed to devils, and censured as the effects of witchcraft or incantment: therefore were these Blasphemers left to the hardness of their wicked hearts.

---When they had treated the Holy Spirit as they had done the Son of God; when they had observed his extraordinary effusions and miraculous operations with scorn, and had blasphemed them, and ascribed them to evil Spirits, to *the prince of the devils*; when they had obstinately made head against him, and despitefully and maliciously persecuted and murdered those that were inspired with him, and assisted by him, to say and do such things as were never heard of or seen in the world before, they seemed incorrigible and incurable: and to what purpose should any further overtures be made unto them? Since they thus rejected the
last

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last offers made by the Holy Ghost, was it not just that they should perish in their ignorance and infidelity, their wilfulness and obstinacy? Other sinners never *might*, but these never *could*, be forgiven; for being arrived at this prodigious height of wickedness, they could not repent. Indeed in other cases, men could not repent of other sins, so as to obtain pardon, unless the good Spirit of GOD struck in with them, affected them with remorse to reflect upon them, inspired them with stedfast resolutions to forsake them, and enabled them effectually so to do: but in this case the Spirit of GOD was so outrageously affronted, and obstinately resisted, that it may reasonably be concluded he would not do it, but rather leave them in an incurable state of blindness and guilt, reserved for the judgment of the Great Day.

So that it is easy to be discovered why it was not to be forgiven in this world: they were so hardened against all the offers of pardon, grace, and glory, that were made by Heaven, that they would not accept of them; and living and dying in this state of wilfulness and obstinacy, no wonder that it

should be the determined purpose of GOD, not to forgive them in the world to come.

Having thus opened and explained the doctrine, I shall only add, by way of application, the following practical reflections.

I. What has been said upon this subject, may serve to silence and quiet the fears of weak and well-meaning people, occasioned by their reflecting on the dreadful sentence denounced against this sin which we have been considering. Indeed those that fear most have generally the least reason to be afraid. It is not the fearful and scrupulous, but the resolute and obstinate, that are in most danger of falling into it. But as for those weak persons that are troubled about it, having heard that it is unpardonable, but not knowing wherein it consists, the most proper thing to be observed to them is this: They may be assured that none of those sins of which they repent is this unpardonable sin. If they believe in GOD, think reverently of him, devoutly worship, and sincerely endeavour to serve him; if they believe that CHRIST is the Redeemer of mankind, and desire and hope to be saved by him; if they believe that he has sent the Holy Ghost into
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the world to plead his cause, to be his Advocate ; if they believe that this Holy Ghost presides in all the sacred ministrations of his Holy Church ; if they adore and bless GOD the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for contriving the redemption of the world, and for conspiring and contributing each their proper part to ransom, reform, and save mankind ; if they can heartily pray to the Father to forgive them, to the Son to intercede for them, and to the Holy Ghost to sanctify their minds, their affections, their senses, and all their powers, and so fit and prepare them for Heaven ; they need not, they ought not, to indulge any fear that they have committed this unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

2. But though every wilful and presumptuous sin be not absolutely unpardonable, yet some of them come much nearer this sin than others do ; and many of them will never be forgiven. The sins even of inconsideration and frailty are worse than those of pure ignorance, and yet wilful sins are worse than these. And there are sins of presumption that bespeak the temper of hell, and point towards a dismal state of eternal mi-

fery, that they are in extreme danger of falling into, who will dare to commit them. There are various kinds of Profaneness and Blasphemy, that are much worse than sins of common Impiety. Besides, these are capable of very high degrees, and exceeding great aggravations; and after the habits of these sins grow stronger and are more confirmed, the conscience wasted, and all the principles of virtue and goodness smothered, and almost quite extinguished, it becomes much more difficult to break them off by repentance; and so much mischief is done by them, that it may be the very next to an impossibility to obtain pardon for them.

3. Therefore, in the last place, we should be admonished to keep clear of every thing that comes near to this unpardonable sin. As this was a despiteful usage of our LORD, who had the Spirit above measure, and a contemptuous treatment of those that were afterwards endowed with the Holy Ghost, and commissioned by him to be the visible representatives of our LORD, and the ministers of his Holy Word and Sacraments; as it was an open and contumelious reflection and scandal thrown upon those gifts with which

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which they were endowed, and by which they were enabled to convince all those that were capable of conviction; as it consisted in, or was committed by, abusing and censuring, perverting and misrepresenting, the persons and ministry of those that were sent by the Holy Ghost, and endowed with great power from on high; so the sin that comes nearest to it now, is blaspheming the sacred and ever-blessed Trinity, ridiculing the great articles and mysteries of Christianity, burlesquing the Holy Scriptures, reproaching CHRIST's ministers, deriding their authority, scorning their message, profaning the places dedicated to the worship of our blessed Saviour, a contemptuous, malicious, or wanton neglect of the instituted means of knowledge and grace, exposing the administration of them, as the arts and methods of priestcraft; making a jest of sermons, sacraments, and publick prayers, of our Redemption by the Sufferings and Death of the Son of God, and our Sanctification by his most Holy Spirit; turning the notion of CHRIST's holy Church, of the Communion of Saints, and of the great doctrines and articles of Christianity, into ridicule; going on in a profane course
of

of Life, and proceeding from bad to worse, from one degree of wickedness and impiety to another ; living without any appearance of the sense of Fear of GOD, without any remorse or penitence of their evil ways.

These are the persons that are likeliest to be deserted by the Divine Spirit, to be left to themselves, the power of their sins, and the tyranny of *Satan*. And though we cannot with any certainty or charity pronounce of any one, that he is arrived at the last height of impiety and wickedness, that he is given up to the delusions of the devil, and that GOD will strive no longer with him, nor ever more make any offers of grace or pardon to him ; yet it is to be thought, that persons of this stamp and character, of this profane and irreligious temper, make the nearest advances to this sin, that Heaven has pronounced unpardonable.

Now to GOD, &c.

S E R-

SERMON III.

On the DANGER

OF

FALLING,

And the NECESSITY

OF

WATCHFULNESS.



S E R M O N III.

I COR. X. 12.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

THE histories to which the Apostle refers in the foregoing part of the chapter, and this text, which is his reflection upon them, stand as warning to all Christians to the end of the world, that they rely not so much upon any external advantages, as to neglect recommending themselves to GOD, by “holding the faith in the
“unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace,
“and in holiness of life:” their privileges will not recommend them to GOD, but the good use that they make of them. It is not any external relation that they bear to CHRIST, but their acting suitably to it, that will in-
title

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title them to the rewards of a future state. They are surrounded with dangers; and therefore it becometh them to take heed, lest, whilst they are dreaming of the great felicities of their state, as they are members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and heirs of eternal glory, they be surprised into everlasting perdition. — *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* — In which words we have these two things observable:

- I. The Persons to whom they are addressed; those, whoever they were, that thought they stood firm; that valued themselves upon their privileges and advantages as Christians; that presumed upon their safety and security, as they stood in such a peculiar relation to GOD and CHRIST.
- II. The Address itself: in which there is one thing implied, that is, the great danger of Falling from this happy state; another thing is supposed, and that is, the Possibility of Standing and Persevering.
- III. There is a Caution or Admonition inferred from the premises; and that is, that

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that every one should take heed to himself. When every thing is considered, there is great danger of falling either from the true faith of CHRIST, from the unity of his holy Church, or from a state of obedience and virtue.

But yet there is also a possibility of standing: if men will do the best they can, they will not find themselves under a necessity of falling into any gross and abominable errors, or into any wilful and wasting Sins. And therefore should every one be cautious, and *take heed lest he fall.*

Of these three points I shall discourse in their order.

And, first, of the Danger of Falling. And this I will *first* shew, from the numerous examples of which we read in the Scriptures, or other credible histories; and, *secondly*, endeavour to account for it, from such considerations as shew how it comes to be so.

As to examples; the Old Testament presents us with great numbers of those, that fell from the Belief of the Existence and Unity of the Divine Nature, into heathenish Idolatry and Infidelity. And, since the establishment

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establishment of Christianity, what numbers do we read of in the ecclesiastical story, that forsook the true faith, and struck in with the various heresies of the times, some of which opposed one fundamental article of Christianity, some another, and some were so absurd, that they seemed to undermine not only the Religion of CHRIST, but even the Religion of Nature! And, besides these, there were not a few, that relapsed into their former religions, whether of the *Jews* or *Heathens*; and many too that ran into the heresy of the *Mahometans*, which now enslaves such a great part of the world. Amongst the examples of those that have fallen from the unity of the Church, to say nothing of the famous Schism that happened before CHRIST, betwixt the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, nor to insist upon the lamentable Schism that broke out since our Saviour's time, betwixt the Christians of the Eastern and Western Church, about the observation of *Easter*; we have so many, and those so notorious, in *Christendom* at this Day, that as it is impossible, so it is unnecessary, to make particular mention of them. But if these would overcharge the discourse, what

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room shall we find for the instances of those, that have deserted a religious and good life?

What are the histories of times past, but the registers of ambition and tyranny, plots and conspiracies, sedition and rebellion, wars and devastations, the acts and consequences of vice and folly? Consult the laws of former times, and they discover numberless villainies and iniquities, that were obviated and punished by them. Thousands of volumes of Civil Law, and ten thousand Ecclesiastical Constitutions, were provided, as so many banks and fences to stop the inundation of those impieties and vices, which threatened the peace and tranquillity, the prosperity and welfare, both of the Church and State. Let us look abroad into the world at present, and we shall see profaneness and irreligion, injustice and oppression, deceit and treachery, intemperance and luxury, as constantly practised, as they are severely prohibited. Pretended Christians, and professed Infidels, myriads of all ages and countries, of all ranks and stations, conspire in the neglect of virtue and religion, and in the practice of those things that are

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contrary to the laws of GOD and Nature, to
common sense and reason.

But, to give some account of the matter
as things stand under the present dispensation
of Christians; and to shew how the danger
of falling comes to be so great; which is the
second thing I propose to consider;

This will appear, whether we consider the
nature of the Christian religion, or of those
that profess it.

As to the Religion itself, there are many
things to be observed in the doctrinal part of
it, that are deep and incomprehensible,
mysterious, and inexplicable to human rea-
son; as, That Three Persons should be One
GOD: some facts are therein asserted, of
which we should never have had any notion,
had they not been revealed to us, some past,
and some future; as, That the Divine and
Human nature should be united in our Sa-
viour; That he should be born of a pure
virgin; That there shall be a resurrection
both of the just and unjust; That CHRIST
is appointed to be the Judge of all mankind.
And if this single point, of GOD's having
revealed and declared these things, be not
always kept in view, the greatest of men
may

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may lose themselves in the contemplation, and at last sit down weary and dissatisfied, after all the inquiries and researches of reason. And, as to the practical part of Christianity, if men do not strictly attend to the Divine authority by which its laws were enacted, and to the sanctions of eternal rewards or punishments that are added to them, there is great danger of their neglecting to observe them. Its positive precepts have only the Divine institution and promise to recommend them; human reason of itself could never have discovered, that they are means for those ends for which they are appointed: such are the Two Sacraments, the institution of the Christian priesthood, and the whole method of salvation established by the Mediator. And, as to the moral precepts of Christianity, some are so sublime and exalted, that there is no little danger of looking upon them to be above the reach of human nature; such as, loving GOD with all our heart, &c. loving our neighbour as ourselves, contentment in every condition of life, intire resignation to Divine Providence, and being perfect as GOD is perfect: others of them go directly against the grain of hu-

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man nature, as taking up the cross, denying ourselves, mortifying our lusts and passions, rejoicing in tribulations, forbearing all manner of revenge to those that do us the greatest injuries, loving our enemies, doing good to those that hate us, and praying for those that persecute and despitefully use us.

If we further consider what human nature is in our present degenerate state; how weak the reason, and how dark the understanding, in most men; how apt they are to mistake good and evil one for the other; how impetuous their inclinations are to many bad things; how strong their aversions to many things that are good; how naturally one sin leads to another, sometimes to support it, sometimes to excuse it, and sometimes to conceal, and keep it out of sight; how irregular and violent mens passions are; and what immoderate fear, or pride, or envy, love, or hatred, rage and resentment, make them capable of; how hard a thing it is to keep the body under discipline, and to make all the outward senses obsequious to reason;—we shall discover still greater danger of mens falling from GOD, by consulting their depraved wills, and degenerate passions. Add

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to all this, the constant temptations of the devil, who is a powerful and subtle adversary; works upon mens minds and bodies, their imaginations and affections; strikes in with their natural tempers, and outward circumstances, to ensnare and ruin them. What a specimen did he give of his skill and power, in the case of our first parents in Paradise, of the body of the *Israelites* in *Horeb*, and of the greatest part of the world, who always were, and still are, gross idolaters by profession, and horribly vile and wicked in their conversation! And finally consider the threats and terrors, the scoffs and censures, the flatteries and promises, of this wicked world, the numberless precedents of sin and folly, that scandalize some, and allure others; and we shall be abundantly convinced of the infinite danger of mens falling from GOD and virtue, of their distracting the Church, and deserting the faith of CHRIST.

But, though the danger of falling be so plain, yet the possibility of standing is no less certain; which is the next thing I proposed to shew. In order to which, I will first consider the examples of persons that

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have stood firm, under the greatest temptations; and then shew, that every one may so stand, if it be not his own fault.

Amongst the examples of those, that under the strongest temptations stood firm in the faith; *Moses*, and the *Maccabees*, and other *Jews*, before CHRIST, and the *Apostles*, and primitive *Martyrs*, after CHRIST, deserve our first and principal regard. The story of *Moses* is very well known to those, that are conversant in the Holy Scriptures. He was born in the time when the king of *Egypt* required all the male children of the *Hebrews* to be put to death, so soon as they were born; but he was concealed in his father's house for the space of three months; after which, finding they could not conceal him any longer, they put him in an ark of bulrushes, and laid it in the flags of the river *Nile*, keeping a strict eye upon it to know what would become of him: and by the Providence of GOD he was found by the king's daughter, who had compassion upon the child, and called his own mother to nurse it: and, when he was grown up, she brought him to the princess, who adopted him for her own son, gave him the best education

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education of the country ; and, in short, intended him to be the heir of the kingdom.

But *Moses*, who had also been very well educated in the religion of his fathers, and saw the infinite absurdities of the *Egyptian* worship ; considering that he could not succeed to the crown without either renouncing, or dissembling, his own religion ; rejected the tempting offer, and *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin.* He renounces a crown, and the government of one of the finest kingdoms of the world, rather than he will deny the Faith, and desert the Religion and Worship of the God of his fathers.

Let us now consider the constancy of the *Jews*, in the days of the *Maccabees*, who were tempted in another way, but were not to be frightened by the most terrible forms in which death itself appeared, to renounce their Religion and Faith, or to eat of the idolatrous sacrifices of the heathens.

In the sixth and seventh chapters of the second book of *Maccabees* we have the surprising

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prising story of *Eleazer*, and the mother with her seven sons. *Eleazer* was so much esteemed and revered for his wisdom and piety, his age and his virtues, that his enemies had so much compassion for him, when they saw he refused to taste of the sacrifices, and to eat that which was forbidden to the *Jews*, that they proposed this expedient for the safety of his life; to wit, He should prepare flesh for himself, such as was lawful for him to eat, and only appear to the spectators as if he took of the sacrificed meat: but he scorned his life upon such dishonourable and scandalous terms; he considered how shocking it would be to his friends and countrymen, what an ill example he would give them, if he appeared at last to abandon and forsake his religion, and to comply with the heathen idolatries; and therefore he freely and bravely offered himself to torment and death, for the honour of *God*, and encouragement of his countrymen to persevere in the profession of the true faith and worship of the Almighty, whatever it cost them. The mother and her seven sons did no less distinguish themselves by their
their

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their stedfastness in the faith, while they submitted to great variety of tortures, and the youngest of them rejected the most tempting offers of the king's favour and confidence, and the greatest honours and preferments he could bestow upon him, when the forsaking of his religion was the condition upon which it was offered. Others might be mentioned of old, who, for the sake of GOD's true Religion, were bound and imprisoned, *were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, were destitute, afflicted, tormented*; and still persevered in the profession of the despised and persecuted truth.

But if we pass by these, since the preaching of the gospel, we shall find a noble army of martyrs, who were proof against all the cruelties and deaths to which they were exposed, with all the variety of engines that the wit of man could inspire, with all the rage and malice that hell could invent. We have also numberless instances of Christians in the primitive times, that did their utmost to maintain the peace and unity of CHRIST's Church,

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Church, by a stedfast adherence to their proper pastors, and would rather choose to be banished, or to die with them, than forsake and desert them.

Should I insist upon the several examples of obedience to the laws of G O D, both moral and positive, who gave undeniable proofs of their love and zeal for G O D, their fear, and faith, and trust in the Almighty, who demonstrated the power of religion in their hearts and souls, by the instances of their love and benevolence to mankind; I should run over a great part of the sacred story, and only present you with such examples as are very well known to those that are conversant in the Scriptures. And if those that are more conversant in other histories call to mind, on this occasion, the brave examples of piety and justice, sobriety and continence, courage and fortitude, or other kinds of virtue, and contend that they equal any that the holy history presents us with, let them enjoy their opinion, since even those instances confirm the argument, and give proofs of what human nature is capable, in the business of religion and virtue.

But

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But let us leave the examples, and consider how evidently this truth appears, from the reason and nature of things.

As to its principles, they are all of them consistent with the principles of reason, and recommend themselves to those that have the most improved understandings. Men of the greatest learning, that have unprejudiced minds, will as soon yield to the proofs of Christianity, as those of a lower class in the school of reason. Many of the primitive fathers were very great masters of philosophy and learning of all kinds, and little inferior to the best that were bred at *Rome* or *Athens*; and, notwithstanding the prejudice of education, the meanness of the fortunes and learning of its first professors, and, what is still more, its avowed opposition to their favourite lusts and passions, yet so forcible was the evidence with which it surprised them, that they both espoused it, and became the most strenuous advocates for it.

To prove that it is possible for us to hold the faith in the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life, we need but consider the nature of Christian
virtue;

But

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virtue; which consists in bearing one loss or pain to escape a greater, and foregoing one interest or pleasure to secure a better; and this out of reverence and obedience to the law of GOD that requires it. And though of ourselves we cannot do it, yet by the help of GOD we may. This was the purchase of the blood of CHRIST, who appointed the sacraments to convey it to those that sincerely desire it, and would co-operate with it. In asserting this possibility, I speak the sense of the Christian Church, which has always obliged her members to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, to maintain the faith, and obey the laws, of CHRIST: I speak the sense of the Scriptures, which exhort us to perseverance; and, when we lapse, call us to confession and repentance: I speak nothing but what every Christian finds by experience.

This is the Sting of Guilt; to wit, it was chosen and wilful. We therefore find our consciences accuse us, when we have done evil, because it was in our power to have avoided it: and therefore are we troubled to reflect upon the neglect of our duty, because

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cause we know it was in our power to have performed it.

I should now proceed to the consideration of the duty of Caution and Vigilance, which results from the Danger of Falling, and the Possibility of Standing: but this will be the subject of another discourse.

S E R.

Sen. G. W. D. Danger of Falling

And we know it will in our power to

have performed it

I should now proceed to the consideration

of the duty of Obedience and Vigilance, which

results from the Danger of Falling, and the

Possibility of Stumbling: but this will be the

subject of another discourse.

SERMON IV.

On the DANGER

OF

FALLING,

And the NECESSITY

OF

WATCHFULNESS.



S E R M O N IV.

I COR. X. 12.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

IN discoursing upon these words, I have first taken a view of the histories upon which the Apostle had insisted, before he gave this admonition to the *Corinthians*.

Secondly, I have considered the two points supposed or implied, from which the admonition is deduced.

Thirdly, I now proceed to insist upon the duty to which we are here exhorted ; and that is, Watchfulness or Caution, that we may avoid, or overcome, the temptations to Infidelity or Heresy, to the breach of Peace and Unity ; and, above all, to a stupid and negligent, or a vicious and wicked, life,

which is, of all others, the very greatest apostasy.

Therefore *let him that thinketh he standeth*, and is well grounded in the principles of the Christian Faith, take heed, *lest there be in him an evil heart of unbelief*: let him always keep his eye upon the main proofs of Christianity, drawn from the Divinity of its Author, and from the nature of the Religion itself.

The promises, types, and prophecies, relating to the Messiah, received their exact accomplishment in him. The voice from Heaven at his baptism and transfiguration, that gave witness to him, the miracles wrought by him, and the spirit of prophecy that resided in him, were a testimony of his Divinity, and proved that he was no impostor. Let him also consider the additional evidences that those who survived him received from his glorious resurrection and ascension, and from the accomplishment of his other prophecies and promises; in the plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles and first Christians, the destruction of the temple, the dispersion of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles:

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and the torments of Hell, to solicit our hopes, or work upon our fears; he will discover the whole to be exactly accommodated to the nature of man, and glorious attributes of God Almighty; and if by taking heed he continue stedfast in the faith, let him also be careful to preserve the unity and peace of the Christian Church.

They that think themselves secure and fixed in their resolutions of adhering to their true and lawful pastors, may yet have the misfortune to meet with some of the disputers of this world, who may start such difficulties as they cannot easily get over, either about the authority of those that settle and impose the terms of Communion, or about the lawfulness and expediency of the terms imposed; objections so artfully contrived, so easily understood and remembred, that it may prove a difficult thing to answer or get rid of them: more skill being necessary to build and preserve a fabrick, than to attack and demolish it.

Persons of moderate abilities may censure their superiors, and quarrel with their constitutions, and seduce well-meaning and unwary persons: but it is necessary, that a
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man be well instructed in the principles of Christianity, and the methods of salvation, the power that CHRIST hath left the true pastors of his Church, the authority which Christian princes have over their subjects in the matters of Religion, in order to reduce such a one, and bring him again into the way of peace and truth; and, after all, those that are deceived, can far more easily understand the arguments by which they are imposed upon, than those by which they are persuaded to return into the Bosom and Communion of the Church they have deserted. For, seducers need but insist upon some one argument to shake them, but their Christian friends or Spiritual pastors, must instruct them in many things to satisfy them, and to make them stand secure and resolved in the time of temptation. But if a person is proof against all the subtilties of crafty men, that would draw him from the faith, or allure him to leave the Communion of an orthodox and true Church; yet still such an one ought to *take heed lest he fall* into a vicious and wicked way of living. Men may think themselves secure, and that very security may be their greatest danger. Self-

confidence renders them impatient of reproof, throws them off their guard, and makes the conquest of them more cheap and easy. And therefore they should never neglect the established means of grace. They should thankfully receive the admonitions of their friends or ministers, and have a constant eye upon all the motions of their spiritual enemies, and never betray themselves into their power by their security and negligence. And especially they should take heed, lest, whilst they put a guard upon one gate, they be surpris'd at another.

When we look abroad into the world, we shall observe, that, among an infinite variety of characters, some, to avoid the odious imputation of hypocrisy, run into the boldest instances of impiety; others stand clear of profaneness, but are enthusiastick and superstitious; some value themselves upon their sincerity, or moral honesty, but neglect the means of grace and pure worship of God; others are constant in the use of means, but too much neglect the end and proper exercise of Religion; some guard against wastefulness, and the ruin of their families, who grossly neglect the Christian education of their chil-

children, and prodigally throw away great portions of their time, as if it were altogether useless and insignificant; some are strict in their own conduct, but are too censorious toward others; others are more candid and friendly, but are too good-natured, and easily seduced; some are proof against lust or intemperance, but are soon transported into the most extravagant passions; others guard against these, but are easy and indolent, too mild and indulgent, where more sharpness and authority ought to be used; some are more kind and obliging, but, when they are offended, are hard to be reconciled; and others are as soon provoked, as they are easy to be pacified; some are not to be tempted to luxury, but they are shamefully sordid and niggardly; others are kind-hearted, and open-handed, but spoil the beauty of their good works with ostentation and vainglory; some are very scrupulous about bad actions, but run riot with their evil tongues; others are not guilty of evil-speaking, but are covetous of fame, and slaves to popular applause; some are not to be tempted by pleasure, but they are not proof against pain; and others are not to be frightened, but they are too ea-

fily flattered into sin; some are never guilty of any scandalous immoralities, but they have no taste for spiritual things; others are not so lukewarm and easy, but then they are uncharitable, stiff, and rigid; in some we may observe a great many good things, and yet some single predominant evil; others will keep clear of all great sins, and are easily deceived and betrayed into small ones; some neither repeat nor repent of their faults, and others repent and repeat them again; some are attached both to truth and virtue, but are shy and reserved, like a book writ in cyphers, full of jealousy and suspicion; others are more free and open, but rash and indiscreet, less concerned for veracity and common decency; some are sober and regular, but precise and unsociable; others are more entertaining in their conversation, but are slaves to their appetites, and given to excess and luxury; some are checked by their reputation, from such liberties as no other principle would restrain; others are negligent of censure, and care not what the world thinks or says of them; some are at first more nice and tender, but by opportunities, and insensible degrees, are drawn to free-

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freedoms, which they did once abhor to think of; others rush like the horse into battle, and become adepts, before one could have thought they would have learned the first rudiments of vice and iniquity; some will abstain from the great transgression, but not from all suspicious appearances; others would not appear to be guilty, but are easily brought to sin in secrecy; some are grave and solemn in places of Divine Worship, but are no sooner withdrawn, than they surrender themselves to the most licentious freedoms; others are so devoted to mirth and levity, that they seem habitually forgetful of God, both in publick and private; some are diligent in business, but not fervent in spirit; others are constant in their devotions, but defective in their practice, and very partial in their obedience; some are strict in their lives, but peevish and uneasy in their tempers; others are more happy in their tempers, but negligent of their families and fortunes; some are inquisitive after, and zealous, for the truth, but uncharitable to those that are not in their way of thinking; others are more kindly disposed towards those that differ from them,

but more indolent and indifferent about particular opinions, and outward forms; some are useful in their professions, but heathens in their religion; others are zealous for the establishment, but useless and unprofitable to the world in their lives; some are publick-spirited as to matters of government, but bad oeconomists in their private affairs; others are much set upon enlarging their fortunes, and raising their families, without any regard of the publick; some are serious about trifles, and trifling in things serious; others trifle in every thing, and are serious in nothing; some guard against this, and are surpris'd by another enemy; and some avoid one extreme, and run into another: but he that regards one good thing should take heed to all; and he that is once good, should be so for ever: and therefore *let him that thinketh he standeth clear of one sin, take heed lest he fall* into another.

Having considered the Danger of Falling, the Possibility of Standing, and the Necessity of Care and Vigilance, from the text, which is the Apostle's improvement of what he had said in the foregoing part of the chapter, there is the less necessity for any practical

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cal application. And therefore I will but just mention two or three reflections, which naturally offer themselves from what has been said, and are not less useful than plain and obvious.

I. And *first*, From the Danger of Falling, we cannot but collect the Necessity of Seriousness and Gravity, a religious composure of mind and behaviour. In all other cases of danger, the impressions are commonly visible, in proportion to the interest that is threatened: in times and places of infection and pestilence, mirth and gaiety are out of date; a solemn mixture of fear and pity discovers itself in every face.

When raging waves, or devouring flames, are making their advances, and threaten to consume and destroy our wealth and habitations, and to leave us comfortless and destitute, the most wild and thoughtless cannot resist or dissemble the impression. When a powerful enemy threatens to invade our country, when it approaches our gates, and is ready to storm the town, such sad extremities require a different behaviour and conduct, than may be allowed in times of repose and tranquillity.

But

But what are armies of men to the powers of darkness? What are their utmost efforts to the assaults of malicious demons? What are plagues and sickness, that seize our bodies, to the infection of sin, that catches our souls? What are waves, and flames, and storms, to the irresistible rage of the fires of hell? to the horrid tempest of the burning lake, in which the wicked and impenitent shall be tossed to all eternity?

Now, are we in danger of all this, and infinitely more than we can describe or imagine? And shall we yet indulge a thoughtless and wanton temper, and play upon the battements, till we tumble down into everlasting perdition?

2. Has G O D been pleased so to order things that we are not inevitably consigned to eternal ruin; but that we may escape it, if we will do the best for ourselves? We see then where the blame lies, if we do fall into it. We have only ourselves, and our own heedlessness, and wilful folly, to accuse. We injure God and truth, when we charge him with our destruction. Shall we blame him for the difficulties of religion, for the weakness of human reason, for the strength of human

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human passion, for our inclination to evil, and averseness to good? all which are the sad consequences of original or actual sins, committed against all reason and conscience, in compliance with the devil's temptations. Shall we blame GOD, who to the lights of Reason added the glories of Revelation? who to the powers of Nature added the supernatural assistance of Divine Grace? who to the inward satisfaction that flows from a virtuous life, has added the promises of eternal glory and happiness? enough to reward us, if we did and suffered ten thousand times more than we do, in the cause of GOD and Religion. No; GOD is clear from the blood of all men; he has solemnly sworn, that he would not the death of a sinner, but that he should rather turn from his sin and be saved: he has done his part in order to save us. If we then perish it is because we would not be saved; we would not do those things that were necessary to salvation; we would not accept of it upon those plain and easy, those reasonable and honourable terms, on which it is offered to us.

3. We discover from hence, that a heedless and thoughtless temper is pernicious to
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mens souls, whether it proceed from ignorance or infidelity, from indolence, or want of passions, or from the power and ascendancy of other things over their hearts, from the want of a due sense of GOD, and the value of their souls, or from a vain confidence and presumption of their own safety and security; or, whatever else may be the cause of it, certain it is, as their care and vigilance abates, their danger increases. When the guards of virtue are turned off, or laid asleep, that is the devil's opportunity to surprise them into ruin. It would astonish one to observe mens diligence about matters of inferior consideration, and their negligence in the concerns of their souls; how studious they are to please those that can prefer or oblige them, and how careless about pleasing GOD, who can save or destroy them; what caution they will use lest they should impair their health, lose their credit, or disoblige their interest; and what little heed they take lest they should fall into sin, or give *Satan* advantage over them: it would tempt one to conclude, that they did not believe the Scriptures, or think there was either Heaven or Hell; or that GOD will
reward

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reward or punish them hereafter, according to their care or neglect to advance in the practice of Virtue and Religion in this life.

Upon the whole, we may observe, that Religion is neither so difficult, nor so easy, as some affect to represent it: it is not so easy, as to allow us to be heedless, nor is it so hard, as to make us despair. When the demands of Christianity, the weakness of our nature, and the vigilance and power of our spiritual enemies, are considered, we may cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

But when we consider, that God is with us, and Heaven is before us, the sense of the difficulties will totally vanish. Christianity is indeed a state of warfare; but we have constant and very powerful allies, to whom our interests are as dear as they are to ourselves. And if God be for us, *who can be against us?* or, by opposing us, who can hurt us? By the defence and assistance of the Almighty, we shall not only stand upright, but go forward in the way to Heaven; and this Divine help and protection, we may depend upon, when we take heed to ourselves, lest we fall in the time of temptation.

Now to God, &c.

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S E R M O N V.

T H E

Love of P L E A S U R E S.

To be regulated by

The Love of G O D.

VOL. II.

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S E R M O N V.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 4.

— *Lovers of Pleasures more than
Lovers of GOD.*

THE Apostle is here advertising *Timothy* of the degenerate state of the Church in the last days: *This know*, says he, *that in the last days perilous times shall come.* And these times he marks out, by the characters that argue their very great degeneracy. Men, says he, shall be *lovers of their own selves*; whose regard for others will bear no proportion to their concern for their own persons, humours, or interests: *Covetous*; so greedy in getting, so niggardly in using, and fearful of losing their money, that their life will be even a torment to themselves: *Boasters*, or vain-glorious; pro-

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missing what they cannot perform, assuming characters that belong not to them: *Proud*; so exalted in their own opinion, that they will look down with scorn and contempt upon others: *Blasphemers*; not sparing even the great Creator and Governor of the universe, but bolting out such things as reflect upon his blessed Nature and Providence: *Disobedient to parents*; too conceited to be advised, too unruly and obstinate to be governed: *Unthankful*, both to Heaven and Earth, for the favours they enjoy: *Unholy*; paying little or no regard to any thing sacred; such as are downright wicked and profane: *Without natural affection* to those of their own species, their own country, kindred, or family, even toward those from whom they sprung, or who are descended from themselves: *Truce-breakers*, as we translate it; such as pay no regard to the most sacred ties and obligations they can lay themselves under; or, as others, implacable and irreconcilable upon any offence; not to be appeased though the offender would sacrifice any thing fit and reasonable to their satisfaction: *False accusers*; traders in slander and calumny, blasting mens characters and reputations, make-

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make-bates and incendiaries, sowing the seeds of discord, and promoting quarrels and contentions: *Incontinent*, or unconstant, weak and changeable, one thing to-day and another to morrow, this in one place, and that in another: *Fierce*, cruel and brutal, strangers to mildness or tenderness: *Despisers of those that are good*; treating men of the best characters, with the least regard and esteem; representing those that are serious and truly pious, as crazed or hypocritical, persons unworthy of notice or consideration: *Traitors*; or treacherous to their nearest relations and most intimate friends: *Heady*; rash and credulous, taking things upon trust, with little or no examination; *High-minded*; thinking well of themselves, magnifying their own merit, exalting themselves out of measure: And then follow the words of the text, *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of GOD*; men of wrong taste and bad turn of mind: loving their Pleasures, their follies, and vanities, more than they love GOD, who both challenges and deserves all their hearts and affections. Not that they will totally and intirely renounce their Christianity; no, they will still have a *form of godliness*, make

an outward profession of Christianity; but they will *deny the power thereof*; it will be no more than an empty sound and shew of Religion, it will have little or no influence upon their lives and conversations.

Every one will allow these, and each of these, to be very bad characters, and so much the worse, as they are applicable to any that make a profession of the Christian Religion. But that upon which I shall at this time insist, is that in the latter part of the 4th verse, *Lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God.*

In discoursing upon which words, I shall inquire what kind of persons may be described by these words, or who may be truly said to deserve this character.

In order to which it may be proper briefly to observe, that Pleasures may be distributed into various classes, according to the different parts or principles of our nature.

For as we have one part of our nature in common with the brutes, so there is one set of Pleasures, common both to them and us, and these are sensual: but as by the other part of our nature we are distinguished from,

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from, and much superior to, the animal part of the creation; so we are capable of Pleasures that are suited and adapted thereto; and these are the Pleasures of Imagination, Reason, and Religion.

Those of the Imagination result from the views we take of, or the reflections we make upon, the beautiful scenes of art or nature; such as delightful prospects of the heavens above, or this globe of earth and water below. The arts of painting, poetry, music, architecture, and machinery of various kinds, do also conspire in furnishing out rich and various entertainments for the Imagination. All which as they are much superior to sensual Pleasures, so they are as much inferior to those of the Understanding, or Religion.

The Pleasures of the Understanding are those that rise from contemplation; or the pursuit and discovery of truth, whether it be physical, mathematical, moral, or theological. But even these, as high and refined as they are, fall very much below that class of Pleasures, that result from pure and undefiled religion, whose ways are called *ways of pleasantness*. Now, that we may better discover what kind of Pleasures the

persons here spoken of were captivated with; we must consider who may be said to be lovers of GOD, which are set in opposition to these lovers of Pleasures: and by the lovers of GOD we are to understand those that believe there is a GOD, and have right notions of him, formed either by Reason or Scripture, which conspire in representing him under the venerable and endearing characters of Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, the Redeemer and Sanctifier of all that are truly good, and the Rewarder of those that diligently seek him: those may be said to love GOD, that as they have been dedicated to him, so they serve and obey him, transcribe his moral perfections into their own conversation, and are partakers of the Divine Nature; who refer every thing to him, deny him nothing to honour and please him; that love what he loves, and abhor what he hates; that are impatient of any thing by which he is offended; and that delight to converse with him, in reading his word, and presenting their addresses to him.

Now it is easy to discern, that the Pleasures to which those in the text are devoted, must

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must be such as in their nature, or degrees and circumstances, are inconsistent with, or prejudicial to, the proper and genuine fruits and effects of this Love of God; which may be the case of any class of Pleasures but those of Religion. For not only the Pleasures of sense, which are in their own nature more gross, and unsuitable to the better part of man, and of which the very brutes have frequently a quicker taste and relish than he has; but even those of imagination, which are more refined; nay, those of reason and contemplation, which are of a more exalted nature than the former; may possibly so engross the man, and take such an intire possession of him, as to leave little or no share for God, whom we are required to love with all our hearts and souls.

Let us therefore examine by what characters we may conclude, that a person is more intirely surrendered to the love of Pleasures, and more constantly attached to them, than to the love of God: and this will appear by these that follow:

1. When the Pleasures which they prosecute, are, in their kind, sinful, rude, or indecent,

indecent, contrary to the law of GOD, or unbecoming their characters and profession as Men or Christians; because such are inconsistent with the love of GOD, and the sincere and uniform practice of religion. The way to judge whether they be sinful or not, is to examine whether they contradict any of GOD's laws, or whether they be not contrary to the main end and design of the Christian Religion; which is to purify our hearts, and regulate our lives, to dispose us for, and render us as eminent as possible in, the practice of piety and holiness, of gravity and seriousness, of modesty and purity, of humility and meekness, of sobriety and chastity. And therefore all such Pleasures as have a contrary tendency, are evil in themselves. It was the design of Christianity to tame and regulate our disorderly passions, to change our tempers, to render us like Saints and Angels, like GOD and our Saviour: these Pleasures therefore which inflame our passions, corrupt and debauch our nature, and principles, that make us like the fallen angels, the basest of mortals, and the brutes themselves, are to be detested and abhorred, as the wiles and methods, by
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which *Satan* endeavours to bring us to his likeness, and involve us in the same misery and perdition, into which he has sunk himself.

2. We may pass the same judgment when the Pleasures are doubtful, and yet chosen and pursued; because thus to do, while they are not intirely satisfied that they are lawful and innocent, is declaring for them without reason or evidence, and shews which party the mind is disposed to side with, and in favour of which it is prejudiced and prepossessed.

3. By our pursuit of those Pleasures that are not directly sinful, but which with proper circumstances, views, and cautions, might be innocent or useful, we may give evident proofs, that we are *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of GOD*, when in their circumstances or consequences, their measures and degrees, the frequency or eagerness with which they are pursued, they prove hurtful to ourselves, or others.

First, If they are attended with bad circumstances; as, if better things are prevented by them: if they are pursued at improper seasons; as, at such times as are sacred,
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being solemnly devoted to the service of GOD, and the offices of religion: or if at such hours as are inconsistent with the rules and discipline of well-ordered families: this is a circumstance that renders the occasion inexpedient, even though it were business, or any pleasure or entertainment, that in itself was ever so innocent and laudable: the case then must be greatly aggravated by following pleasures either vain and fruitless, or sinful and prejudicial.

Those Pleasures likewise will fall under the same censure, that introduce persons, especially young ones, into bad acquaintance, or engage them in an immoderate and fruitless expence of time or money, which might have been applied to much better purposes, in the improvement of their own knowledge and virtue, or the interest and advantage of others, who greatly want them, for the most important services both of common life and religion.

But when persons of lower fortunes, or necessitous circumstances, neglect their business to pursue their diversions, or spend and consume that in the gratification of their appetites or curiosities, their vanities or follies,
which

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which ought to have been applied to the maintenance of their families; they must surely in their sober intervals justify the censures of others, by their own bitter reflections upon themselves. Their wives and children are sacred characters, challenge their greatest regard, and most constant care and affection; and therefore when they idly squander away that which should be food and raiment for these their helpless relations, whom GOD and Nature have committed to their care, they must well deserve the character in the text, and be most justly censured as *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of GOD.*

Another bad circumstance in the pursuit of Pleasure, is setting ill examples. — For in this bad world, and especially in this degenerate age, arguments are drawn with the greatest dexterity from every thing that seems to give the least countenance to licentiousness or liberty; and the practice I need not say, but the presence of one serious person of a good reputation both for sense and piety, at any publick entertainment, or diversion, of a doubtful or suspicious nature, will more effectually solve the doubts
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and scruples of those, who before were not so well satisfied of their innocence or expediency, than any other arguments which could have been alleged in their favour. And such as repeat these diversions without any bounds or measures, will, from one single act of such persons, draw arguments to justify their bad habits, or customary practices. How cautious therefore should persons of this character be, of doing any thing which even in its consequences may prove injurious to the honour of *GOD*, or detrimental to the cause of Virtue and Religion!

Once more; It is a circumstance that renders a thing inexpedient, that perhaps in itself might not be plainly sinful (and so in the present case would be an argument of mens too great attachment to Pleasures, and too little consideration and concern for the love of *GOD*, and honour of Religion), when they pursue such as, for kind or constancy give great offence to persons of sober thought and consideration, and a serious and religious turn of mind. All men who have any good principles, or good-nature, will industriously avoid any thing that would be an occasion of grief and uneasiness to others:
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when therefore any one pursues Pleasures that have such effects, it is a plain argument that their love and respect for those liberties outweighs the regard they have for those that confessedly bear the best characters.

2dly, The bad consequences which they are sensible will attend them, is another argument of their too great regard for their Pleasures. If they take possession of their hearts, give their minds a wrong turn, gradually corrupt their manners, injure their health, not to say hasten their death; and, notwithstanding all these bad effects, of which they cannot but be sensible, they still continue to be devoted to them, put them in the place of GOD and Religion, and serve and love them, as if their chief and complete happiness consisted in them; if they take possession of their hearts, and follow them into their families and closets; if they press in upon their devotions, and carry away their thoughts from those objects upon which they should be fixed, when they engage in any sacred offices; if their whole conversation turns upon them; and, whilst they are made the constant topicks of their discourse,

discourse, they, one while, express their great expectations from them, and, another while, their wondrous satisfaction in them; then, if the observation of our Saviour be true, *That out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*; it is but too easy to observe what their hearts most abound with, and what lies uppermost in them. And if in consequence hereof better things are forced to give way, and surrender to these intruders; if the private and publick offices of Religion grow tasteless and insipid, dull and heavy; if sacred assemblies be more neglected, and prayers and sacraments less attended, I do not say quite deserted, because that would carry the matter farther than the text does, which supposes that they have still the Form of Godliness, whilst they are captivated with their Pleasures; but if these religious exercises be less esteemed, less frequented; it is a very bad sign, that these Pleasures have got the ascendancy, and that they are preferred to every thing by which the love of GOD is expressed or demonstrated. If they also prove expensive, and *that* be consumed upon them, which should relieve the necessitous; if they can hear the cries of
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the poor without any regard, but are all attention to the harbingers of their Pleasures: if they can find money to spend in their sensual and wanton gratifications, but make many excuses, and loud complaints, when a proper occasion offers itself for their encouragement of some worthy and charitable design: if they waste more this way in a night or an hour, than they give in a week, or a month, to refresh the bowels of the needy: if the poor, I mean those that are truly objects of charity, by the order of Providence, and the rules of Christianity, be appointed to receive so much of the superfluity and abundance of the rich, as will support them under their pressing necessities; and they harden their hearts against them, whilst they are open to every Pleasure that courts their respect and favour: nothing can be plainer than this consequence from these premises, That they are *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God.*

If they are so enamoured of them, that they are impatient of hearing any thing said against them; if they will neither bear publick nor private advice or caution, reproof or admonition, from their friends, relations,

or spiritual pastors, respecting either the kind of their Pleasures, the circumstances that attend them, the consequences they draw after them, or the eagerness and constancy with which they are pursued; it is a sign that their hearts are captivated and insnared by them, and that they look upon their captivity and bondage as their greatest felicity and happiness. If they unbrace the mind, and give it a vain and licentious turn; if they are the occasion of a wild and irregular flow of spirits; if they so influence their conduct and conversation, that one who considered the strictness and gravity of their religion, would never suspect that they were registred among Christians; if they inspire them with pride and conceit, give them a disposition for intrigue and artifice, subtilty and dexterity, in imposing upon the credulous and unsuspicious; if they have a natural tendency to corrupt their manners, and it be but too apparent that they begin to operate that way; if they carry strong temptations to passion or intemperance, to impurity or profaneness, to prodigality or extravagance;—and notwithstanding their sense of all this, they still pursue them: then the
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same conclusion must also be drawn from these appearances, That they are *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God.*

If their Pleasures make deep impressions upon their constitutions, if they injure their health, and render them less serviceable to God, or the world; and yet they will not take warning, but follow the chace, expose their health, and venture their lives, in the service; if they are overborne, and sink in the contest, they will die *martyrs* indeed (if that *abuse* of the word may be pardoned), but not for CHRIST and his Religion: the cause they espouse, and the master they serve, we need not name; it is but too plain, from whom they must expect their reward.

3. As by the ill circumstances with which they are attended, and the bad consequences with which they are followed; so from the eagerness, violence, or excess, with which men pursue them, it is evident, that they are *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God.* When they pursue them with zeal, and surmount every obstacle that lies in their way; when they have a circle of Pleasures to tread, and when one has been served,

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another is ready to call for their attendance; when these have as constant returns with them, as the Worship of GOD with those of a more serious disposition; when they make them a trade, and it is all the business of their lives to attend them; when they pursue them much farther, and attend them much longer, than they would any thing that was grave and serious, calculated for the honour and service of GOD and Religion; it is but too evident, that their love of GOD bears little proportion to their love of Pleasure.

We cannot but be sensible ere this, who they are that fall under the censure of the text; so that as this matter needs no further enlargement, I will only add, That in what I have said I am not to be understood of any one particular set of Pleasures, but of any kind of Pleasure whatever, by which GOD and Religion are put out of the possession of the heart.

And of these there is an endless variety: one is for the Pleasures of the field, another for those of the town; one is for musick, another for gaming; this for the tavern, and that for the theatre; one for the Pleasures that are to be enjoyed in silence and secrecy,

another for those in which great numbers may participate; one is for mirth and jollity, another for reading and study; and some have a taste for divers of these, and others for almost every kind of Pleasure; some of which may be innocent, and others pernicious: but even of the former sort, the seasons and circumstances, the ends and designs, the rules and measures, with which they are pursued, make a mighty difference; and whilst they render them useful to some, make them fatal to others.

Although we do not say it is necessary for common Christians to be as grave as Apostles, or even as strict and severe as philosophers; although allowances be made for mens different stations and professions, for the genius of countries, and manner of ages; yet we must insist upon this, that the love and fear of GOD should possess the heart of every Christian; that he ought not to surrender himself to the flesh, the world, or the devil, all which he renounced in his Baptism; that he ought to beware of lawful things, as well as things unlawful; of things which although in themselves they might possibly be useful, or allowed to be innocent, yet may prove the ruin and perdition

tion of those, that by the habits they contract in following and repeating them, by the effects they have upon them, and the power they get over them, make it appear to all that observe them, that they are *lovers of Pleasure more than lovers of God.*

Let us therefore be persuaded to regulate our love and pursuit of Pleasure by the love of God, and not suffer this to be overruled or effaced by the other. And to this purpose we might do well to consider,

1. How much more worthy of our affections God is, than the transitory Pleasures of the present state.

2. The ill consequences of sensual Pleasures, and the bad effects they have upon the mind, and body, and outward estate, of those that pursue them: they enervate and unbrace the mind, and make it weak and tender: they frequently prove fatal to the body, especially those that are more gross and sensual; and many of them are expensive, and extend their bad influences to mens fortunes and families.

3. The indulgence of these is not only contrary to the order of beings, in which our Creator has placed us; for they are so many proofs of our folly and weakness, in
pre-

preferring sense to reason, the body to the soul, appetite to religion, and time to eternity; but they also contradict that covenant, and solemn vow, under which we have chosen to lay ourselves in Baptism, which we have renewed at Confirmation, and as often as we have received the Holy Eucharist.

4. Besides this it is to be considered, that how much soever we are captivated by them, how strong soever the enchantment is, what sense soever we have of them, while we pursue and enjoy them; the time is not far off, when we shall lose all taste and relish for them; and when that scene of life is over, in which they prove so alluring, so powerful and bewitching, they will leave us with a very ungrateful farewell, and give us nothing but pain and grief to reflect upon them.

In the mean time, the way to correct our ill taste, is, to consider the dignity of our nature, our relation to our Saviour, and those infinitely more noble Pleasures that true Christians have in the ways of Religion: Pleasures above the animal nature; Pleasures worthy of Saints and Angels, the highest orders of creatures in the whole creation.

And further, to check our immoderate pursuit of Pleasures, we might do well to reflect upon the Divine Providence, which not only observes all our conduct, but also visits our sins upon us, as shall seem best to his infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy; now in our bodies, and then in our fortunes; one while extending its retributions to our friends and families, and another while to our country and nation; scourging us with our enemies, or arming the very elements against us; chastising us one while by flames, and waves, and tempests, another while binding up the clouds, making *the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron*; and changing *the rain of the land into powder and dust*, Deut. xxviii. 23, 24. *When his judgments are abroad, the inhabitants of the earth should learn righteousness*, Isa. xxvi. 9.

It is also worthy to be considered, that the nearer we advance towards Heaven, the less relish shall we have for the Pleasures of Sense and Time; and the more for those of Virtue and Religion, which will last to eternity. Those that have broke the enchantment, and are set out of the reach and power of temptation, look down with great
pity,

Ser. 5. *more than of God.* 105

pity, and a holy indignation, to see their children and friends in a state of bondage, held fast in the chains of Pleasure; and so far from having any intention of delivering themselves out of their captivity, that they look upon themselves to be in a state of happiness, or liberty. In a word, did we but consider what a severe scrutiny we must at length pass, and what a poor account we shall be able to give of our time, if we have devoted it so intirely to mirth and gaiety, to pleasures and diversions; it might tend to correct our folly, and admonish us to take care in time, to get out of the way and number of those that are *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God.*

S E R-

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 were them of God.
 give, and a holy indignation, to see their
 children and friends in a state of bondage,
 held fast in the chains of Placatus; and to
 see them having any intention of delivering
 themselves out of their captivity, that they
 look upon themselves to be in a state of
 happiness, or liberty. In a word, did we
 but consider what a severe journey we must
 at length pass, and what a poor account we
 shall be able to give of our time, if we have
 devoted it to mirth and gaiety,
 to pleasures and diversions; it might tend to
 correct our folly, and admonish us to take
 care in time to get out of the way and num-
 ber of those that are slaves of Placatus were
 than slaves of God.

SERMON VI.
ON THE
PARABLE
OF THE
SOWER.

SEERMON VI.

MATTHEW XIII 8.

And he spake many things unto them

but they understood not a thing



OF THE

THE PARABLES THAT BEGUN HERE IS TO
SHOW THE R.

... which it appears to relate to
... the Word of God
... in this our land
... At this time I shall impart upon

The picture of a nation to which
The picture of a nation to which

S E R M O N VI.

MATTHEW xiii. 3.

*And he spake many things unto them
in Parables, saying, Behold, a sower
went forth to sow.*

TH E parable that begins here is so very instructive, that it is worth our while to turn our thoughts upon it, and the interpretation that our LORD himself has given of it: by which it appears to relate to that duty of hearing the Word of GOD, that is chiefly practised in these our sacred solemnities. At this time I shall insist upon these three things; viz.

I. The preface or introduction to it.

II. The parable itself.

III. The

III. The circumstances of the history by which it is connected with the explanation that follows it.

~~I~~ Let us first observe how it is introduced by the circumstances of the time, place, and persons, to which it relates.

It was at that time when our LORD had been convicting the *Pharisees* of blindness, and prejudice, and superstition, with relation to the breach of the Sabbath, both by Scripture, Reason, and Miracle : when he had been healing all that crouded about him for that purpose ; when he had been dispossessing a blind and dumb devil, and warning the *Pharisees* of the unpardonable nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost ; when he had been dealing very freely with that generation of vipers, who, being evil, could not speak good things, any more than a rotten tree could bear good fruit ; when he had been warning them of the danger of idle words, not meaning so much their trifling empty talk about little impertinences, as those scandalous defamatory words against himself, by which they obstructed the course and progress of Truth, Piety, and Virtue ; when he had been reproofing that wicked

Ser. 6. of the SOWER. III

wicked and adulterous generation, who, though they saw miracles wrought every day, both to satisfy their hunger, and cure their diseases, yet wanted a sign of their own choosing; and when he had been telling them, how dear those were to him, who heard his words, and did his Father's will. Then, when great crouds came about him from every city, and all parts of the country, insomuch that he was obliged to go on board one of the ships that lay near the shore, that he might be less incumbered, and better heard, by the multitude; he taught them many things in divers parables; and amongst the rest he delivered the parable of the Sower; representing the fate of the seed, according to the difference of the soil upon which it fell: some fell by the wayside, and part of it was trodden down under foot, and part picked up by the fowls; some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, the rock lay so near the surface; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth, through which to work its way. But, when the sun was up, it was scorched, and for want of root and moisture, it withered. And some fell among thorns, which

which sprung up, and choaked it, so that it came to nothing. But some fell on good ground, and did yield fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold; the increase being proportionable to the goodness of the ground into which it was cast. I shall not stand to open the parable, because the explication of our Saviour is to follow: but shall proceed to the circumstances of the history, by which the parable is connected with the explication.

1. And the first that offers itself is, *Luke viii. 8. When he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear: q. d.* That which you have heard is very well worth your consideration, and what I shall further add equally deserves your attention. If any regard is to be paid to the authority of the Speaker, of the true Messiah; if any respect be due to the importance of the matter, being the *words of eternal life*; if you have any taste, or judgment; if you have any concern for the information of your minds, and the direction of your lives, or the security and welfare of your souls; it becomes you to reflect upon the things that I have delivered to you.

2. The

2. The questions proposed by his Disciples, when they were alone with our Saviour, after the assembly was dismissed; *viz.* why he spake in parables, without giving the interpretation of them to the people, as he did to his intimate friends that constantly attended his ministry. He took very great pains in speaking, and the end of speaking must be to be understood; but they perceived, that the people did not understand him; and the parabolical way was liable to so much ambiguity, that one might take what he heard in this sense, and another in that; and some might make one application of it, and others another: so that it rather ministred occasion of argument, than offered means of instruction. And yet they were persuaded he had some good reason for taking this method, and desired that he would clear up that matter to them.

3. This their inquiry is satisfied by our Saviour; who resolves this procedure into the different tempers of the multitude, and of his disciples. The multitude was not disposed to make sufficient inquiry; which, whenever it was made about any necessary truth, in a proper manner, and for a good

end, was never left unsatisfied by our Saviour. Nor were they disposed to yield proper attention; they gazed at the miracles that were wrought, and took their share of the loaves that were distributed, and received the benefit of his miraculous cures. But when any thing was said that bore hard upon their religion or tradition, their hypocrisy or superstition, or was levelled at their prejudices and errors; they turned a deaf ear, and were not patient of giving it the hearing: neither could they give what they did hear and understand, its due consideration. Their prejudices and mistakes were so radi-cated and established, that they were incapable and impatient of weighing things fairly, comparing the evidences which they had for their *Jewish* rites, and those that were offered to prove the truth of the Christian Religion. And therefore did he speak in parables to them, because having ears they would not hear, and having eyes they would not see; and so fulfilled what the Prophet *Isaiah* had foretold of them, vi. 9. *By bearing ye will hear indeed, but ye will not understand; and seeing ye will see indeed, but ye will not perceive: for this people is waxed gross,*

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gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

This was the disposition of the gross of that people, though by crouding about him, and pressing to hear him, or would at first think, that they greatly admired him, and were very much taken at his discourses (and no doubt some were so well disposed, that his words had a good effect upon them): yet it is plain the poorer sort followed him for loaves, and the sick for healing, and the rich out of hatred and ill-will, seeking occasion to catch and insnare him: and the former were ignorant and stupid, and the other were prejudiced and hardened, and would not see, or hear, or understand, lest they should be surpris'd with conviction, that their hearts and practice, their temper and religion, were to be changed; and so they should become converts and proselytes to that Religion, which they thought so great a reproach and scandal; and discover, that pardon and salvation were only to be expected in that way, against which they were so ex-

ceedingly prejudiced. But the Disciples, that constantly attended him, were lovers of his doctrine; and were inquisitive to know the meaning of things that they did not at first understand, or which they were in any fear of mistaking, and took proper opportunities of desiring the LORD to explain them. They let his words sink into their ears and hearts; and therefore by this method of instruction he discovered who were, or who not, proper auditors of his doctrine. Many of the multitude, though they pressed to hear him, yet came to insnare and betray him; and therefore he was cautious of provoking their rage, or giving them opportunities of gratifying their malice. When there was occasion to observe upon their superstition, or their adherence to the tradition of their ancestors, to reprimand them for their pride and self-conceit; when he would foretel the ruin of the *Jewish* Church, and the progress of his Gospel; these were very nice and tender points, and which if he had treated them in a direct and plain manner, they would have resented, and improved to the greatest prejudice, both of himself, and his Disciples. He therefore spake of them in
such

Ser. 6. *of the SOWER.* 117

such a way, as was yet understood by his Disciples, and constant attendants; or else he gave them opportunities of inquiring after his meaning, when the multitude was withdrawn; and, in a little time the events that concerned himself, and his Church, would very fully open them to all that had heard them. And in the mean time he took all occasions to instruct the multitudes in those things that concerned their practice; witness his sermon upon the mount, and other moral discourses, which were plainly delivered to them.

But to his friends and disciples *it was given to understand and know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven*; which had been so long concealed under types, and shadows, and obscure prophecies. Our LORD justifies this conduct from the equity of the thing, *Matth. xiii. 12. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath; i. e.* whosoever duly improves that which is given him, shall receive more; and he that neglects to make a good use of that which he hath received, shall be deprived of it; he has re-

ceived it in vain, 2 Cor. vi. 1. He is not worthy to have it continued, and it shall be given to others that will make a better improvement of it. He congratulates his Disciples upon their diligent attention, and serious application, to learn of him the Word of Life.

This was a blessed thing at present ; *Blessed are your eyes, for they see ; and your ears, for they hear.* You have noble opportunities, and make a good use of them ; your attention and consideration are the happy means of a good proficiency, both in knowledge and practice ; and this will tend to still further and more complete blessedness, both in this world, and the future. The longer you live, the happier and more perfect you will be, in the present life : and at last your present knowledge and faith will terminate in vision, and your hopes in fruition : your present grace will be perfected in glory, and you are in the way to life, and proceed in it with chearfulness and resolution : you both learn and practise my doctrine and precepts ; than which nothing can render you more blessed.

This

This was a happiness that many Prophets and righteous men had formerly desired; but the appointed time was not then come. What they learned of old, they learned from types and shadows. They wanted that free and full, complete and spiritual dispensation to be opened, which was reserved for them that were contemporaries with the Messiah, that heard his heavenly doctrine, were witnesses of his holy life, and miraculous works, and enjoyed his blessed conversation.

This is the parable, and these the circumstances of the history, that introduce our LORD's interpretation; which would be too tedious, or too superficial, should we now proceed to consider it. I shall therefore reserve it for the subject of another discourse; and leave what I have said, with these particular reflections.

1. Many are called by the word preached, *but few are chosen*; few made so wise and good, as it is designed to make them. And the reason appears from what we have heard; they do not hear with due attention, and proper dispositions. This was the cause of their receiving the Grace of GOD in vain. All was figure and parable, because having ears they heard not; and have-

ing eyes they saw not. They were not attentive to what they heard, did not allow it its due weight and consideration. They overlooked what they saw : after the first surprize the miraculous works of our Saviour were observed with as little regard as we see the sun and stars in the firmament.

We see upon the whole, how solicitous our Saviour was to recommend himself, and his doctrine, to the world. He maintained an unspotted innocence ; he opened the Scriptures, and confirmed his doctrine and pretensions by them. He was most compassionate and benevolent ; he wrought miracles to feed the multitude, and to heal their diseases. He touched their favourite prejudices and errors with the greatest candor and tenderness ; and yet he met with great contradiction of sinners, and much less success than might have been expected.

2. It appears from hence, what great concern we have to regard the message of peace and salvation, that came down from Heaven. He that hath ears to hear, must hear other things, that may not concern us, or be indifferent to us : the advices that arrive from the several courts and countries beyond sea, we may hear, or we may forbear ; but the
news

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news that is brought from Heaven, the glad tidings of salvation, is of infinite importance to us; our well-being, both in this world, and the next, depends upon it.

3. The Word of GOD affects us in such a manner and measure, as is correspondent to our tempers and dispositions: it neither enlightens nor reforms those that are indisposed to receive it. The multitude, that was blinded with passion and prejudice, that was proud and conceited, that was stupid and ignorant, that was superstitious and hypocritical, received no benefit from our Saviour's discourses: they were left in darkness, and under the power of their sins and errors. On the other hand, the Disciples, that were inquisitive and impartial, serious and considerate, sincere and upright, meek and lowly, humble and modest, devout and pious; were edified, illuminated, convinced, converted, and confirmed, by the sermons which they heard from our Saviour.

It is therefore of the last necessity to be attentive, and receive the word of life with proper dispositions, that it may be *the favour of life, unto life*; otherwise, it will go without its effects. Like the beams of the sun,

it

it will have different effects, according to the nature of the matter upon which it falls; it will dry, or dissolve, harden, or soften, scorch or nourish, things exposed to it, according to their respective natures.

4. Our LORD here instructs us, that if we would have more, we must improve what we have. After we have *received the Grace of GOD in vain*, how should we expect further offers of it? GOD dispenses the blessings of Grace, otherwise than those of Nature. These he scatters without distinction; his sun shines, and the dews and showers fall, upon the evil as well as the good. But if we spurn his Gifts, and despise the riches of his Grace, he will withdraw them, and not prostitute and expose them to contempt, or neglect.

5. CHRIST has here admonished us of the inestimable happiness of hearing the word of Salvation, the means of Knowledge and Grace, and the glad tidings of the Gospel. The heathen yet sit in darkness: the *Jews* under the old dispensation could only see the good things to come through veils and shadows. And besides this, the Gospel is accompanied with greater measures

tures of Grace, and more abundant effusions of spiritual gifts, than attended any former dispensations. But as the blessedness of enjoying it is great, so will the punishment of despising, or rejecting it, be proportionable. I cannot better conclude the reflections and observations we have made upon this passage, than with the excellent collect of our Church :

Blessed LORD, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning ; grant, that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of Everlasting Life, which thou has given us in our Saviour JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON VII.

ON THE

PARABLE

OF THE

SOWER.

SERMON VII.

ON THE

PARTIAL



S. O. W. E. R.

S E R M O N VII.

MATTHEW xiii. 18.

*Hear ye therefore the Parable of the
Sower.*

HAVING already heard the parable, and observed upon the circumstances of the story, by which it stands connected with the explication ; we are now to proceed to our Saviour's interpretation ; and to observe,

I. What is to be understood by the seed.

II. What by the fate or success of the seed, according to the nature of the soil into which it fell.

I. What we are to understand by the seed.

This is the Word of GOD ; and the resemblance betwixt one and the other holds
on

on various accounts; some intimated in this parable, and others deduced from the nature, and reason, of the thing; one being as capable of improvement, as the other; one requiring as much care and culture, as much fitness and preparation of soil, as the other; one being as necessary to the preservation of the soul, as the other to the life and vigour of the body; both being subject to the like hazard and casualties: weeds and thorns, blasts and storms, choak and destroy, one as well as the other. Both must be sown in order to their increase; both are small in their beginnings, but falling into a good soil are plentiful in their increase. Both fall into different soils, and yield fruit in proportion to the goodness of the ground. Both require the blessed influence of Heaven to render it fruitful; the clouds and dew must water and refresh it; the sun must warm it; the blessing of the Most High is necessary to preserve, and increase, the seed sown either to preserve and cherish our animal, or spiritual, life. Each for some time seems to lie dead, or dormant, in the ground; and when it sprouts out, it grows we know not how, and comes to maturity by slow
and

and imperceptible degrees. Both produce their own kind : the seed sown in the earth converts the juices, and the matter with which it mixes, into its own nature, and multiplies its own species, whether it be wheat, or any other grain : and so the word of GOD converts the heart into which it falls, makes all its thoughts Divine, its passions Holy, and transforms the whole man into the Image and Nature of GOD. After our LORD had shewn what is denoted by the seed in this parable, he shews the different fate or success of the seed that was sown, according to the different nature and circumstances of the soil into which it was cast.

1. And first explains who they are that received the seed by the way-side : *They that hear the word of the kingdom, and understand it not ; so that the wicked one cometh, and catcheth away that which was sown in the heart.* By which he describeth those hearers that are careless and inattentive, ignorant and inconsiderate ; who are unmindful and regardless of what is said ; think it of no concern to them, whether it be true or false ; have no taste for it, no notion of it : and therefore *Satan*, like a

bird of prey, is ready to pick it up, and carry it away, lest they should understand it, and be affected with it, believe and be saved. Those that hear what they think does not concern them, are not very attentive; and those that mind little, will but learn little. Those that are unconcerned about the word, will not understand much of it: and while they are ignorant, they will not be much affected with it; it will make but little impresson; the traces will be soon worn out: they hear it indeed, because it falls in their way; but it is thought of little or no importance. What is it to them, whether the world was eternal, or created, as the *Jews* have represented it? Whether CHRIST was GOD, or Man, or both, as the Christians believe? What if he was so exposed and crucified, as we learn in the Creed? Or if he rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven; is that any more to them than the sun's rising to the meridian, which he does every day in the year? As to his being so highly exalted in Heaven, is this any more than we are told of the heathenish gods? If he is to come again at the Last Day to judge the world,

this

this is a long way off; and when it does come, they can but take their chance among millions of others, who have known no more, nor lived any better, than they do.

2. He shews who they are that receive the seed into stony places: Those that hear the word, *and anon with joy receive it*: these, having no root in themselves, *endure for a while*; but *when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by they are offended*. By which he describes such hearers as appear to *receive the word with joy*, and for a while seem entertained and delighted with it; some on one account, some on another; but having no deep conviction, give way in the day of temptation: when tribulation or persecution arises, they apostatize from GOD, and desert his Truth and Religion. They hear it indeed with joy; but this is not a true spiritual joy, but such kind of pleasure as they take in a stage entertainment, where the ideas are bright, the thoughts glowing, and the words well chosen, and well connected: where much art is shewn in description, the passions moved, and the senses and imagination presented with fine and gaudy scenes:

but all the while the conscience is not touched; the heart is not affected; the judgment is not convinced; the matter sinks not into the inward man; it dies upon the ear, it takes no root; and therefore such hearers are unsteady and inconstant; they fluctuate and waver, yield to every temptation, and fall away in the day of trial.

3. The next sort of hearers are they that receive *the seed among thorns*: such as hear the word; *and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.* The word that falls amongst the thorns wants air, and earth, and sun, and every thing necessary to its growth and perfection. Cares and business smother and oppress it; riches take such hold of the heart, that it finds no entertainment; pleasures and amusements divert more serious thoughts, and ingross the mind and affections. They are already possessed of the ground; so that the seed that falls among them must die, and perish, for want of being covered with reflection and meditation.

Let us leave those unfruitful hearers, with that mixed character drawn of the people in *Ezek. xxxiii. 30. Also thou Son of Man,*

Ser. 7. *of the SOWER.* 133

the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses; and speak one to another, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh from the LORD. 31. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. 32. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but do them not.

4. The fourth part of hearers are those that receive the seed into the good ground; who hear the word, and understand it; who bear fruit, and bring forth, *some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.* By which he characterizes those that both hear and attend, and understand and consider it; who apply it as the rule of life, and bring forth fruit, according to their capacities, opportunities, and advantages. They hear it, as it is indeed the word of God, and not the word of man; as a matter of infinite importance to their better part, and future state; as that which is to inspire them with new and spi-

ritual life, to build them up in their most holy faith, to shew them what they are made by Sin, and what they may be made by Grace: what they are to know, and what they are to do, to be happy. They attend to it with great seriousness and reverence; they have a proper taste for it, and understand and perceive the sense, and weight, and importance of it. They make it the subject of their meditations; their thoughts dwell upon it; they consider the authority with which it is supported, the end for which it is designed, the absolute necessity of receiving and considering it, and being influenced and directed by it. They use it as a rule to walk by, as the true touchstone of their notions and principles, as the guide of their lives and manners, warning them what they are to avoid, and admonishing them what they are to be, and do, to be saved. And meeting with this reception, it becomes fruitful; and according to their talents and capacities, their various circumstances and opportunities, they bring forth good fruit; *some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold*. As the seed sown upon good ground requites the husbandman's care and pains,

pains, and expence; so they bearing much fruit, return GOD the glory of his own dispensation. They go from one degree of knowlege and grace to another; they never think themselves sufficiently wise and good, but endeavour to increase in knowlege, to be wise to salvation, and to be holy and perfect, as their heavenly Father. This is the interpretation of the parable, given by infallible Truth itself; and these that follow, the reflections which this interpretation suggests:

1. We should take all possible care of our hearts, that the soil may be fit to receive the seed of GOD's word, and to bring forth fruit to perfection. For this end we must ever have an awakening sense of our danger, and call in our thoughts whenever they begin to stray, and wander abroad. If we through negligence, wantonness, or curiosity, send out our thoughts, or suffer them to range, or invite or call in objects to entertain them, or open the doors to receive them; like so many birds of prey, they will pick up the seeds as they fall, that there will be no possibility of profit or increase. We may as well expect a crop where we did not sow, as where we suffer the seed to be picked up,

after it has been scattered in the field. We must therefore ever watch against a train of impertinent roving thoughts, that are of a different nature from those, which the word of GOD should both find and excite. Nor is it less requisite that our hearts be of a proper temper to receive this heavenly seed. If they be hard and impenetrable it can take no root, any more than the seeds can grow that lie scattered upon the rocks. Unless the seed sinks deep into them, and is cherished with pious and devout meditations, it will soon dwindle away, and come to nothing.

Another piece of our spiritual care and husbandry is, to clear the ground of briars and thorns, that would eat out the heart of the soil, and choak the word, that it cannot grow up to perfection. If riches, honours, and pleasures, have possession of our hearts, objects of a different and contrary nature can find no entertainment there. For as the nature of some seeds is so contrary, and requires such different juices to moisten them, that they cannot thrive together in the same soil, so the thoughts of things spiritual and religious require such a kind of ground,

ground, and a culture so different from that which is proper to thoughts of wealth, and worldly enjoyment, that one of them will most certainly destroy the other.

We need say no more to convince us of the necessity of bringing good and honest hearts, of a nature and temper suitable and agreeable to the seed that is to be sown in them, that can digest the doctrines and precepts of eternal life, and have such a degree of warmth, and such kindly juices, as will convert the seed and the soil into the same nature.

2. Pressing to hear sermons, though we think it a good sign, is yet no *certain* sign of an honest and good heart. What multitudes came about our Saviour to hear him; and yet how many of his hearers were unfruitful? Though he as intimately knew the thoughts of mens hearts, and secrets of their lives, as he plainly saw their outward conditions; though he knew every proper motive and argument, by which to work upon his hearers; though he was a perfect master of address, and, by their own confession, *spake as never man spake*; though he had the Holy Spirit to confer upon them, to render

render the word effectual; though he was quite blameless and irreprovable in his life, diligent and laborious in his ministry, and was not more solicitous about any thing, than he was about the progress of the Gospel, and salvation of their souls; yet He, who had the words of eternal life, had no better success, than to convince and persuade a small share and proportion of his hearers. The seed that he scattered, fell, some by the way-side, some on stony ground, and others among thorns. A fourth-part only fell on good ground, and brought forth fruit, according to the preparation of the soil, and the honesty and simplicity of their hearts, to whom he preached.

No wonder then that the success of his ministers should be no greater; no wonder, considering their ignorance and infirmities, their imperfections and defects, that it should be much less than that of their great Master was. We may easily inflame and provoke men, but not so soon convince and persuade. *Who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?* was a complaint made long ago, of the ill success and entertainment of the word of God.

How

How few are preached out of any sin, or brought to the conscientious performance of any duty ! Lying and swearing, adultery and fornication, heresy and schism, malice and revenge, slander and defamation, are as constantly practised in the world, as they are exposed in the pulpit. How few are to be preached into Charity or Justice, Religion or Piety ! I mean not the outward form, but the inward power. We may perhaps not always use the best motives and arguments ; but we cannot miss of those that ought to be sufficient, if we have any regard for the Scriptures. And yet we find great complaint of ill success, not only amongst the present generation, but the primitive Fathers, the Apostles, and Prophets of old.

There ever was great ignorance and superstition, great inattention, and want of reflection, in the bulk of the people, that composed their audiences. Their hearts were so callous and stony, that the word could take no root in them. Their affections were earthly : worldly cares and sensual pleasures ingrossed their thoughts ; wrong turns and tempers indisposed them for the entertainment that was necessary to be given
to

to the message that was sent from Heaven, to shew the necessity of virtue and godliness of living here, to prepare them for a life of glory and happiness hereafter. While we say no more than falls in with their notions and humours, they will have patience with us; but if we attempt to convince them of any dangerous errors, into which they are fallen, of the folly or vice of any habits they have contracted, or the evil of the neglects in which they persist, we are in danger of provoking, but have little hopes of convincing them. We can say so much against drunkenness, adultery, or fornication, or any other deadly sin, as will make men ashamed to defend or apologize for them; but we can seldom reform them, till poverty, sickness, or age, renders men incapable of committing them. If we preach up meekness and humility, forgiveness and mercy, purity and charity; such as have these virtues already, will admire the beautiful form of these, or other, Christian graces: But those that are unacquainted with the life and exercise of them, want that taste and temper, that are necessary to their being affected with the recommendation

mendation of them. A melancholy observation this, that preaching should be attended with so little profit!

When is then to be done? Shall we decline the honour of being preachers of righteousness, and say as *Moses* did, *Exod. iv. 13. O my LORD, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send*; and desire to be excused from executing a commission that will be so unacceptable, and is likely to be so unsuccessful? At least, may we not spare sowing the seed, till we are satisfied of the goodness of the soil? Are not the path-ways to be seen, the stony ground to be distinguished, and the briars and thorns to be perceived and felt? And must it not be very improper to throw away the seed upon places where we can expect no harvest? May we not choose our ground, and sow only upon that which is duly prepared?

Now, in answer to all this, we may reflect upon the difference betwixt the literal and parabolical sense of this passage. Similies and parables do not tally in every circumstance, but only correspond in the main point. In *Nature* we can easily discern the
briars

briars and thorns, the stony ground, or the path-ways, but not in *Religion*. The good and bad are sometimes so disguised, and always so mingled, in the Church, that we cannot with certainty distinguish one from the other. Were it in our power, we would either stop, or fence off, the ways that are made over the field, where we are to sow the seed. Were we able, we would dissolve and soften the stony ground, and root up the briars and thorns, and prepare the soil for the seed. But this is chiefly to be left to the hearers, and the influences of Heaven upon their hearts. When we have prepared the seed, and used our best skill in dividing the Word of Truth, we must sow it without discrimination, and leave the success to the blessing of GOD: *For though Paul plant, and Apollos water, yet GOD alone must give the increase.* Nor shall our reward be measured by our success, but by our diligence and faithfulness, in dispensing the Gospel.

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part-way, but not in Religion. The good
and bad are sometimes to be distinguished, and al-

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the other. Were it in our power, we would

SERMON VIII.

THE

Manifestation of GOD

In the FLESH,

A

Mystery of Godliness.

SERMON VIII.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.



Mythology of Godliness.

S E R M O N VIII.

I T I M. iii. 16.

Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness : GOD was manifest in the Flesh.

IN this chapter the Apostle had been giving *Timothy* instructions how to discharge his high office in the Church of GOD; and in this verse makes an excursion upon the excellency of the Christian Religion, saying, *Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness; q. d.* If any thing can be asserted about which no disputes can or ought to be raised; if there be any thing about which all Christians are or should be agreed, this is it : *Great is the Mystery of Godliness*; the dispensation of Divine Grace and Love in the Redemption and Restoration of fallen man was truly stupendous

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and

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and amazing in all its parts and circumstances: GOD *was manifest in the flesh*; the Divinity assumed the nature of man into a personal union, when our LORD was incarnate in the body of a virgin, and *took upon him the seed of Abraham*.

That these words were spoken of our Saviour, I believe I may take for granted. And in my present discourse I shall from them, and from other Scriptures, shew these four things; *viz.*

- I. That there were many *presages* of his becoming, and *evidences* of his accordingly proving, an extraordinary person.
- II. And not only so, but a multitude of proofs of his being a Divine Person, and very GOD.
- III. I shall shew that the Mystery contained in this doctrine is no reason why we should reject it. And,
- IV. That although it be a very great Mystery, yet it is a Mystery of Godliness; and highly tends to promote true and practical holiness and religion.
- I. We find in the Scriptures, that there were many presages and evidences of his being a very extraordinary person; such as the
salutation

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salutation of the blessed virgin before his incarnation, *Luke i. 28.* his miraculous and extraordinary conception, *Luke i. 34, 35,* the interview of *Mary* and *Elizabeth*, *Luke i. 41.* the notification of his birth by an Angel, *Luke ii. 9.* the praises sung by that heavenly host that suddenly appeared with that Angel, *Luke ii. 13.* the wise men going out of the east to worship upon the appearance of his star; and that star's going before them, and standing over the place where the holy babe was laid, *Matth. ii. 9.* as also *Simeon* and *Anna's* prophecies of him, when he was presented in the temple, *Luke ii. 28.*

These were such presages of his extraordinary distinction, as served to excite the attention, and draw the observation of the people upon him.

Nor were there wanting suitable proofs of his being really what all these bespoke him, when he manifested himself to the world. His questioning the doctors in the temple when he was but twelve years of age, *Luke ii. 46.* his fasting forty days and forty nights; his conflict with, and victory over, the devil, *Luke iv. 13.* his heavenly doctrine, *Matth. v.* his mighty works; such

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as turning water into wine ; healing the sick of various diseases, and some of them of very long standing ; giving sight to the blind, though born so ; stilling a tempest ; walking on the sea ; curing *demoniacks* ; blasting the barren fig-tree ; feeding the multitude with very small provision, four thousand with seven loaves, nay, five thousand with five loaves ; his purging the temple ; discovering mens secret thoughts ; silencing the priests and elders ; and giving power to others to do all kinds of miracles ; proved him to be a very extraordinary person.

The same was further proved by his predictions ; as that of his being betrayed, and by whom ; Saint *Peter's* denial of him ; his Disciples deserting him ; his own sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension ; the persecution of *Christians* ; the rejection of the *Jews*, and the calling of the *Gentiles* ; the preaching the Gospel to all nations ; the destruction of the holy city and temple, with the variety of calamities that were to introduce it ; all these predictions, I say, receiving their exact accomplishment accordingly, proved him to be one of the greatest of Prophets

phets which had ever appeared amongst men.

To all which we may add other evidences of his being every way extraordinary ; as, the testimony of *John Baptist* ; the voice from Heaven at his own baptism and transfiguration ; the confession of the very devils ; the miracles that were wrought by the bare use of his name ; the officers falling to the ground upon his speaking a word ; the dream of *Pilate's* wife, and the admonition she sent thereupon to her husband ; the circumstances attending his death, as the extraordinary eclipse of the sun ; that dreadful earthquake that rent the rocks, and opened the graves ; the rising of many persons from the dead, and appearing openly in the holy city ; were not these so many demonstrations of a person of such extraordinary worth and dignity as had not appeared in the world before ?

And yet, as all *Hereticks* mix some truth with their errors, so the *Socinians* will grant all this, but further they will not advance. The *Arians* will assent to all this, and much more : they will allow our Saviour to have had an existence before all other creatures ; but they will not allow him to have been true and real *GOD*, of the same substance

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with the Father, and of equal power and glory, wisdom and eternity.

II. Let us therefore proceed to the Scripture account of this matter, where we shall find him represented as the true GOD in the most high and absolute sense.

This we may argue, first, by plain consequences drawn from many Scriptures; as such where he is said to be *in the form of GOD*, and *equal with GOD*, *Phil. ii. 5, 6.* to be *the express image of his person*, *Heb. i. 3.* to have all *the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily*, *Colos. ii. 9.* Divine attributes are ascribed to him; as eternity, *John i. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was GOD.* *John xvii. 5. O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* In *Revel. i. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the LORD, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty.* And that this is spoken of the Son, is plain from the 17th verse, where he says of himself, *I am the First and the Last*; and thus he describes himself, *Revel. xxii. 13. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending,*
the

the First and the Last, spoken by the same person that afterwards says, *I Jesus have sent mine Angel*: these expressions are the common descriptions which the Scriptures give of the eternity of GOD, whose being is commensurate to all the several respects of duration, past, present, and to come. Besides,

The attribute *Almighty* is part of the description which is so peculiar a property of him who is GOD by nature, that the Scripture never gives it to any other person. So in *Revel. xi. 17. We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and which wast, and which art to come*; for thou hast received thy great might, and hast obtained thy kingdom.

The knowlege of mens hearts, and secret thoughts, is attributed to him: *John ii. 25. He knew all men, he knew what was in man. Luke vi. 8. He knew their thoughts.*

Absolute Omniscience is ascribed to him, *John xxi. 17. LORD, thou knowest all things. John xvi. 30. Now we are sure, that thou knowest all things.*

That he is Omnipresent, is plain from *Matth. xviii. 20. Where two or three are ga-*

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thered together, there am I in the midst of them. Matth. xxviii. 20. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

That he is unchangeable, the Apostle declares, *Heb. xiii. 8. JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; so Heb. i. 8. Unto the Son he saith, The Heavens and the Earth they shall perish; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

And as Divine attributes, so Divine honour is given to him; *John v. 22, 23. The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

Internal acts of Divine honour respect him as the object, such as Faith, Hope, and Love; *John iii. 36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of GOD abideth on him. John xiv. 1. he himself saith, Ye believe in GOD; believe also in me. He is also the object of Christian hope; as we read in 1 Tim. i. 1. the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; and if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, 1 Cor. xvi. 22.*

External

External acts of adoration and worship are directed to him as the proper object; *Luke xxiv. 33, 52. They, i. e. the Apostles, and they that were with them, worshipped him; i. e. CHRIST, who was parted from them, and carried up to Heaven. Acts vii. 59. They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

Saint Paul uses such forms of benediction as ascribe grace and peace equally to the Father and our LORD JESUS CHRIST: *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*, is his ordinary salutation in the beginning of his epistles. He also prays to CHRIST, *2 Cor. xii. 8. For this I besought the LORD thrice, that it might depart from me: and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly will I therefore glory in mine infirmities, that the power of CHRIST may rest upon me.* And we read, *Phil. ii. 9. GOD hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow; nay, the Angels and all the hosts of Heaven worship him, Heb. i. 6. when he bringeth in the First-born*
gotten

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gotten into the world, he saith, And let all the Angels of GOD worship him. Revel. v. 13. Every creature which is in Heaven, and on Earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Let us add, that Divine operations are ascribed to him; such as

1. *Creation.* John i. 3. *All things were made by him.* Colos. i. 14. *In whom, i.e. in GOD's dear Son, we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible GOD, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* Heb. i. 8, 10. *Unto the Son he saith, Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands.*

2. To

2. To him also is ascribed the *preservation* and government of all things; *Colos. i. 17. By him all things consist.* Heb. i. 3. *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things, by the word of his power.*

3. *Pardon of sins* was dispensed by him, and still is. *Matth. ix. 6. The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.*

4. *The mission of the Holy Ghost* is ascribed to him; *John xv. 26. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

5. *Miracles* were performed by his Divine power. *John v. 19. What things soever he, i. e. the Father, doth, these also doth the Son likewise.* And the like power was imparted by him to Believers, *John xiv. 12. He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father.* He promises to his Disciples whatsoever they should ask in his name, *John xiv. 13. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do: if ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* To him the Apostles frequently ascribe the works of Grace and Regeneration,
equally

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equally with the Father. *Rom. i. 7. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. John xv. 5. Without me ye can do nothing.*

And as the consequence from all the fore-mentioned texts, amongst many others, is very strong and evident for the Divinity of our Saviour; so the same is to be argued directly from such texts where he is absolutely called God, or *Jehovah*, or *Lord of Hosts*; and from such also where such epithets are annexed, as declare and demonstrate him to be a God *by nature*, and not only *by office*. In the Old Testament we read, *Isa. vi. 1. I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple: above it stood the Seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly; and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And in the 5th verse, Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. And that our Saviour is here intended, we find in John xii. 41. These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake*

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of him. The Psalmist says, *Psalm cii. 25. Of old thou, Jehovah, hast laid the foundation of the earth.* And the Apostle to the Hebrews witnesses, that to the Son he said, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.* In the New Testament he is absolutely called *G O D*; as *Acts xx. 28. Take heed unto yourselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,* *John xx. 28. Thomas said unto him, My Lord, and my God.* *Rom. ix. 5. Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.* *John i. 1. The Word was God.* *Heb. i. 8. Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Such epithets are also added to the word *God*, when applied to our Saviour, as restrain it to the highest and most proper signification; such as the *true God*, *1 John v. 20. The great God, Tit. ii. 13. The mighty God, Isa. ix. 6.* And he is *over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5.* In a word, the fullest titles of Divinity are given to him; such as the *Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. The King of kings, and Lord of lords, Revel. xvii. 14. and xix. 16.* And as cre-
ation

ation is ascribed to him in the most extensive sense of the word, so with respect to the *creatures* he is called the *everlasting Father*. After all which proofs of his Divinity we may well say with the text, that he was *God manifest in the flesh*: **G O D**, not figuratively, but properly; not by office only, but by nature; not created and made, though before any other creature, but co-eternally existing with the Father. Having all this evidence of Scripture to prove this point, that our Saviour was both **G O D** and **M A N** in the same Person, we are of necessity to believe it as an article of faith. And yet we are to look upon it as an adorable mystery, because we could never have had any knowlege of it, but that it has been revealed to us from Heaven; and also because there is so much in it, that it will be always unsearchable and incomprehensible to mortals, as to the *modus* of the union of these two natures in the same person; nor is the *mysteriousness* of this truth any reason we should reject it.

SERMON IX.

THE

Manifestation of G O D

In the F L E S H,

A

Mystery of Godliness.

2

SERMON IX.

Manifestation of G. O. D.



Mystery of Godliness.

S E R M O N IX.

I T I M. iii. 16.

Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness : GOD was manifest in the Flesh.

I Shall therefore proceed to shew, that the *Mystery* contained in this doctrine is no reason why we should reject it.

That it is a *Mystery*, is here asserted ; that the *manner* of it is inexplicable and inconceivable to human reason, is not to be denied. But what then ? Should we inquire why *GOD* made us men, and endowed us with finite capacities, and limited the extent of our knowledge with such narrow bounds, we should be too bold and presumptuous. That it has been his good pleasure so to do, is sufficient to convince us, that there is infinite reason for it. And we

SERMON IX.

THE

Manifestation of G. O. D.



Mystery of Godliness.

S E R M O N IX.

I TIM. iii. 16.

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may as well inquire on the other hand, why why he did not make us brutes or reptiles, plants or vegetables, stocks or stones.

In God's creation there are, perhaps, all possible degrees of existence, sinking and decreasing to the nearest approaches to nothing *below us*; and rising and increasing to such degrees of perfection *above us*, as approaches as near the infinite Creator, as he thought fit to order. And though we had never heard of this great Mystery of *God manifest in the Flesh*, yet the whole creation would still have been full of Mystery to us. Who will undertake to explain the manner of performing the operations of our minds or senses? Which way can we turn our eyes, or thoughts, but we shall find a thousand, and ten thousand things, of the existence of which we are certain; but the *modus* of which we must confess to be inconceivable? Were we equal to the *Cherubim* and *Seraphim*, yet as long as we are creatures there would be unsearchable Mysteries in the nature and perfections of an infinite God. But what can be clearer to thinking sober men, than the existence of the Deity, without which no other thing could possibly have

have existed? What an unsearchable Mystery is there in making something out of nothing? What finite intelligence will attempt to explain the manner in which it was done? And who will deny, that *myriads* of creatures now have being, which once were *nothing*? And so, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet that there are not Three Gods, but One God, we need but open the Bible to be convinced. But to unravel this great Mystery of the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature, and to undertake to render this Mystery intelligible to man, is too great a task for an Angel. But why should men raise such disputes about it, and why should they attempt to account for it? Why, indeed! But so it happens, that one raises such doubts, or advances such doctrines, as are inconsistent with the plain declarations of the Scriptures; and another is forced to make use of such terms as shall exclude the sense and explications given by the other; and so multitudes of heresies arising, and differences increasing, our Creeds have been enlarged, and new terms invented, to obviate the errors advanced and expressed

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in other terms, not only unscriptural, but such as are against the obvious and manifest sense of the Scriptures. Nor indeed do those that oppose the doctrine of the Trinity get rid of the Mystery, by any expedient or explication they have been able to invent. That the Father should be God, and the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, is a Mystery: and is it not, to say that a God is made and created; that Divine worship is to be paid to one that is no otherwise a God than by office?

We see then, that God's *being manifest in the Flesh*, is a great Mystery; that this is no reason why we should reject it; but being very expressly revealed we should believe it. And especially since this doctrine is full of the most forcible motives and arguments to promote true and practical Holiness and Religion.

IV. Which is the next article I proposed to make out; that it is a Mystery of *Godliness*, as the design of it was to vindicate the Honour and Law of God, to regenerate the nature of fallen man, and to open the kingdom of Heaven to all Believers: and as the natural tendency of it is, not only the re-
formation

formation of our lives, but the exaltation of our nature; both as it is already taken into personal union with the Divine nature, by the incarnation of our Saviour; and also as it raises our hopes of being at last transformed into his own likeness in the kingdom of God.

Now that it is such a *Mystery of Godliness* will appear, if we reflect, that when man had transgressed the Law of God, he knew not what method to take to appease, nor which way to fly to escape, his displeasure. How could he hope for redemption without remission? And how could remission be expected without satisfaction to Divine justice? And how could satisfaction be made to Divine justice, unless God's honour was repaired, and Man's nature renewed? Now all this could never be effected by a sinner, nor by the most innocent creature; not the sublimest Angel, not all the glorious Angels in Heaven, could do it. For the utmost that any creature can hope for, is to recommend *himself* to the Divine acceptance; and therefore he can never *merit* any thing for *others*. Nor on the other hand, can we conceive how the Divine nature should be *capable* of those

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submissions and sufferings, that the Divine justice insisted on.

How shall we conceive that any one could reconcile God and Man, unless he had both their natures united in the same Person; and so had an equal interest in both one and the other? But no such person as this was to be found in the whole Creation. Man therefore seemed to be in a case as desperate and forlorn as could be imagined. But yet God was pleased to consider him as his creature, though he was become a sinner; and to remember his own design in creating him, which was to celebrate his praises, to imitate his perfections, to glorify his name, and to be for ever happy. Upon which (if it be lawful for us to speak of God after the manner of men) there arose a kind of debate betwixt the Divine Justice and Mercy; the former urging a man's deserved doom, and the other pleading for the suspension of it, and his deliverance from it.

Now this was the state of things that puzzled all created wisdom; this was a difficulty which the most glorious of the *Che-
rubims* or *Seraphims* were not able to solve. But (oh, the infinite perfections of God!)

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when things were brought to this extremity, his sovereign Wisdom interposed, and found out a way to reconcile the demands of justice, and the pleas of mercy. This heavenly Wisdom proposes *Immanuel* to be the Mediator, to do all that was necessary to reconcile G O D and man, and to restore man to a capacity of pleasing God, and of being for ever happy. In this expedient did Divine Justice and Mercy both agree; and the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity consented to undertake and accomplish all that was necessary for this purpose. Upon which covenant and engagement the Christian Church was founded, and mankind were assigned over to the Redeemer, to save or destroy, as to him should seem expedient.

Now this merciful overture was published to our first parents, and their posterity, at various times, and in such degrees, as the Divine Wisdom thought proper. And at the last, in the fulness of time, G O D was made manifest in the Flesh, and the Son was sent by the Father to be the Saviour of the world.

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All which, when seriously considered, will appear to be a dispensation of Divine Mercy and Justice, Goodness and Wisdom; the whole process of which, as mysterious as it is, its most effectually displays the perfections of God, and lays us under the strongest obligations to devote ourselves to his worship and service.

1. It displays in the most wonderful manner the love and goodness of God in designing the redemption of man, and sending his Son for that purpose.

2. It magnifies the condescension of CHRIST in assuming our nature, undertaking and accomplishing the great work for us.

3. It demonstrates the cursed nature of sin, and the indignation and severity of God against it.

4. It sets before us the love of CHRIST to sinners, in exposing himself to such and so many sorrows and sufferings for them.

5. It serves to expose the monstrous ingratitude of those thoughtless and careless sinners, that will not answer the kind designs of Heaven, in the provision that is necessary for their salvation.

6. And

6. And the desperate condition of those that obstinately stand it out against all the overtures that God has thought fit to make them.

7. It gives us all desirable encouragement to repent and amend our lives, since we are sure that the atonement made by our Saviour was sufficient, and that his intercession in Heaven must be prevalent for the remission of those sins of which we sincerely repent.

And finally, As it may serve to assure us, that *there is no other Name under Heaven given to man, by which he may be saved, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ*; because there can be no other of equal dignity, so it may convince us of the necessity of going into his way, and submitting to his terms, as we would ever hope for salvation through him; for he had absolute power and authority to open the way to Heaven, and appoint terms of salvation.

To conclude; That this doctrine, of a *Mystery of Godliness*, has a close relation to the practice of the Christian life, is evident from hence; that Christian faith in the doctrine of our Saviour is a Moral duty, or a Christian

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stian virtue ; is the act of the *will*, as well as of the *understanding*. Both these faculties are subdued to the obedience required of all to whom the Gospel is preached : both pay homage to GOD, and submit to his authority. The faith of a Christian is an instance of his humility, in yielding his assent and consent to the proposals and declarations of the Gospel. Faith requires evidence, but does not intirely depend upon it. Sometimes, where this shines brightest, as it did in the miraculous works of CHRIST and his Apostles, yet men found excuses and pretences for not believing ; but where there was a proper temper and disposition, men believed without seeing ; upon whom our Saviour pronounced this beatitude, *Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet hath believed.* As there are rational grounds, so there are other motives of assent or dissent, by which the judgment is influenced and determined, either without evidence, or against it. As to the point of persuasion, Inclination has oftentimes a great share in the business ; and, as to obstinacy in dissenting or disbelieving, prejudice and indisposition have very much power and influence.

We

We find ourselves much disposed to believe what we desire may be true; and, on the contrary, averse from seeing what we have no inclination for. We find by experience, that our education, and reverence for great names, our passions and inclinations, have a mighty influence over us, in receiving or rejecting what is offered to us; so that faith is a mixed act of both the understanding and will, and has a mighty dependence on one and the other; and therefore it is an act of obedience to the wisdom and goodness, and truth, and authority of the Almighty. Now this doctrine of the Divinity of our Saviour, that high sense of GOD *manifest in the Flesh*, being plainly declared in the Gospel, is an article, the belief of which is an instance of our duty highly pleasing to the Almighty. We may add, that CHRIST's conferring Grace by the operation of his Spirit, is at once an argument of the truth of this doctrine, of the dignity of his Person, and also of the usefulness and necessity of Divine Grace in the Christian scheme, which without it could not be supported. The subduing the dominion of sin is of as great importance as washing
away

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away the guilt of sin; and the communication of Divine Grace is a work of equal power and necessity with that of the expiation of mens guilt. Now as this is the office of the Spirit, it is an argument of *his* Divinity, no less than the atonement and satisfaction for sin is an argument of the Divinity of *our Saviour*. No finite creature could be the universal soul and principle of holiness to the Christian Church, and every true member of it. What creature is able to penetrate our thoughts, to enlighten our minds, to change our hearts, to spiritualize our passions, and turn the stream of our affections? Now this Spirit proceeds from *this GOD manifest in the Flesh*; and therefore the denial of the Divinity of our LORD drew after it the denial of the Divinity of the Spirit, and subverted the doctrine of Divine Grace. But when we think soberly and reverently upon it; when we contemplate the miraculous gifts, and sanctifying graces, of this Spirit; we shall be sensible, that these are so many arguments that prove his Divinity, and consequently the Divinity of that LORD that sent him; *for he that is sent is not greater than he that sent him*; and therefore

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fore this doctrine of the Divinity of our Saviour, of GOD being *manifest in the Flesh*, must stand as a firm and established doctrine; as a doctrine of the foundation, without which the Christian Religion could not stand, but would be wounded in its very *vitals*. It therefore appears with sufficient evidence, that this doctrine of GOD *manifest in the Flesh*, although it be a Mystery, the grand Mystery of Christianity, yet it is a *Mystery of Godliness*; full of motives and arguments to persuade us to Christian lives, to inspire us with Christian hopes, and all other Christian graces; to persuade us, who are men, to imitate Him that was, and is, and ever will be, the unchangeable GOD; and who became Man like us, to the end that we should imitate Him, and become holy, *as He that hath called us is holy*, in all our conversation.

GOD was *manifest in the Flesh*, that we might be filled with the Spirit: he assumed our Human nature, that we might put on his Divine nature: he came down from Heaven, that he might raise us to Heaven: He took upon himself to be the Saviour of the world; and first to save us from the
power

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power and dominion of sin here, that so he might deliver us from the guilt and damnation of it hereafter.

Now to God, &c.

S E R.

S E R M O N X.

The PROMISE of
C H R I S T 's
Perpetual Presence
WITH HIS
C H U R C H.

SERMON X.

The PROMISE of

CHRIST'S

Perpetual Presence



CHURCH.

S E R M O N X.

MATTHEW xxviii. 20.

*And, lo, I am with you alway, even
unto the End of the World. Amen.*

WHEN persons of sober thoughts and consideration reflect upon the excellency of the Christian Religion (either *comparative*, as it stands distinguished from other Religions; or *absolute*, argued from its Author and design, the harmony of its parts, the perfection of its doctrines and precepts, its friendly aspect upon human societies, and the present and future happiness of mankind, the helps that it affords its professors, and the motives by which it enforces the observation of its laws; *viz.* threats and promises which extend to eternity, the easy and honourable methods prescribed

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therein, to interest us in its benefits and privileges, the forgiveness of our sins, the favour of God, and life eternal); they must needs, with very great pleasure, survey its proofs, not only for their private conviction, but to vindicate their profession from the unjust accusation of its adversaries.

This is an argument that is always proper for Christians, and especially now, that the enemies of Christianity do not attack it in its particular branches, but lay the ax to the very root, and dispute the truth of the whole.

Let us therefore consider the *intention* of our Saviour in this promise; and the *accomplishment of it*, in the dispensations that followed it.

As to the intention of it, in few words it seems to be this; *viz.* That, as there should be occasion, CHRIST's Apostles, and their successors, should find, that his Holy Spirit would be present with them to the end of the world, as the principal Cause with the instrumental, as an invisible, but powerful Agent with his visible ministers, to plead the cause of CHRIST; to give credit to his Religion; to support and justify them in the
pro-

propagation of it; to give authority to those whom they should ordain, knowlege and grace to those that should use the means which they should administer; to serve all the necessities of his Church; to defend and preserve it, from the attempts of infidels in all ages; so that the gates of hell should never prevail against it.

As to the accomplishment of it, we may appeal to the registers of Christianity for the time past, and to the experience of all good Christians for the time present, whether the Spirit of CHRIST, has not given sufficient evidence to Christianity, and does not still all that is necessary to fulfil this promise.

This is a point the more necessary to be considered, since, amongst those that affect to oppose Christianity,

I. Some pretend they cannot see how CHRIST has been with the preachers and professors of his Religion, according to this sense and import of the promise.

II. It is no less needful to consider, what necessity there was for the presence of CHRIST by his Holy Spirit, because others pretend they can perceive no occasion to in-

roduce a Religion of so much goodness and excellence, by such a profusion of miracles.

III. And since others raise a difficulty of another nature, and pretend these extraordinary dispensations are no less necessary now, than they formerly were, either to introduce it where it is not received, or to confirm it where it is; it may not be improper to turn our thoughts upon this also.

And lastly, To consider what use may be made of the whole.

I. In order to shew the accomplishment of this promise in the first ages of the Christian Church, we must consider, how it appeared that CHRIST was with the Apostles, and first preachers and professors of his Religion.

Now, if some were inspired with the word of wisdom, and enabled by the Holy Ghost to understand the Scriptures, that were before delivered to the Church, and the true sense of those things that CHRIST in his life delivered to them; if others were enabled to compose hymns and prayers, and to perform the publick offices of devotion by inspiration; if they were inspired with the knowlege of things done in distant places,

or

or that were to be done in future times; if they were enable to speak with tongues, and to interpret what was spoken by the Divine *afflatus*, in languages unknown to some of the hearers; if they were enabled to discern mens spirits, and discover hypocrisy, or secret infidelity; if they were able, by the invocation of the blessed Name of JESUS CHRIST, to cast out devils, and to make them confess themselves to be so; if without medicine or enchantment, by the same Holy Name they could make the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, and cure other bodily diseases of various kinds, of intolerable weight, and of dangerous issue; if they could raise the dead to life again, and inflict blindness, diseases, or death itself, in a miraculous manner, upon the scandalous professors, or obstinate opposers, of Christianity; if they were supported by the Spirit of CHRIST, under the most grievous trials and persecutions, and enabled to resist unto blood, and glorify their Saviour by their sufferings and death; if to those extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Spirit, his sanctifying influences were also added, by the help of which they ar-

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rived at those heights of virtue and piety, that were unheard-of in other parts of the world ; we must confess, that CHRIST was present with them, and that he spake to the world in and by them, 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

For the proof of these things, which are points of fact, we have the best historical evidence ; and, as such, we appeal to the testimony of Scripture, which records so much of the *charismata* or gifts of the Spirit, poured upon the Apostles and first Christians, as puts the matter out of all question. And the proof of this, *as a history*, is made out by human testimony ; as that, by reasons drawn from the nature of things, and resolvable into the truth and veracity of God, than which the principles of science, or the truth of our rational faculties, are not more evident ; and yet these plain facts are now resolved into allegory, not by men that prefer reason to revelation, but by such as still more absurdly prefer their own conceit, and mere imagination, to human reason : Facts, that were pointed at in the antient prophecies, and to which constant appeals were made for the proof of our Religion, before its most violent persecutors, upon which
many

many of them were converted, and those that were not, did not deny, but confess, that *notable miracles* were done; the *Gentiles* ascribing them to their imagined deities; and of the *Jews*, some pronouncing them equal to any that could be expected from the *Messias*; and others more perversely ascribing them to a wrong principle; and since they could not *deny* them, did industriously *blacken* them, imputing those effects to the power of the devil, which had a direct tendency to ruin his interest, and were at once to be ascribed to the greatest power and goodness: Cures, wrought upon men, that felt their blessed influences, and made their devout acknowledgements to Heaven for them; wrought upon children, whose friends and parents knew that they both needed and received them: Works, superior to those of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and which can be no more disputed than the plainest facts recorded in the *Greek* or *Roman* story. It is confessed, that some of the first Christians ran into a fond imitation of the *Jews*, in allegorizing upon Scripture histories; and the reputation of *Origen*, in following ages, led many into the same

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fanciful way, in some of their first essays in Divinity, who, as their judgments grew riper, confessed they were ashamed to review them.

St. *Jerom* tells us, that in his younger years he writ a commentary upon one of the Prophets in this allegorical way, which found its readers, and was not without its admirers; amongst whom he met with one weak enough to commend it in his presence; on which occasion he thus expresses himself:

“ I wondered, I confess, that although
“ one had writ but very indifferently, he
“ found a reader of the same class and
“ turn with himself; he extolled the performance; I blushed to hear him speak
“ of it; he extolled the mystery and allegory of the composition to the very skies,
“ whilst I hung down my head, unable to
“ confess my shame and confusion.” But could these great men now converse amongst us, their confusion would not be equal to their indignation, to find how their writings are abused, their sense perverted, the strongest and most rational parts of their works overlooked, their more juvenile performances,

formances, and most unguarded passages, produced, not so much, perhaps, to give credit and authority to the works of our present infidels, as to expose those fathers themselves, and weaken that cause which they had always nearest their hearts : for it is notorious, that they never denied the literal sense of the histories from which they raised them. So far were they from this, that in their stricter discourses they made them arguments, and appealed to them as proofs of the Divinity of that Religion, which they were wrought to recommend and confirm ; and concluded men guilty of an obstinate infidelity, and profane contempt of GOD, and the offers of his infinite mercy, that neglected so great salvation, *which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirmed by them that heard him; GOD also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 3, 4.*

II. Let us consider, in the second place, what necessity there was at first, for those extraordinary dispensations, and what for the ordinary, and common influences of this blessed Spirit now, and to the end of the
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the world. As to the former it is very well known, that the first publishers of Christianity were obscure persons, neither distinguished by birth, fortune, nor education; and yet they were sent out as sheep amongst wolves; had very powerful enemies, and violent prejudices, to encounter. The doctrines they were to preach, were very strange; as that Three Persons should be One God; that the same Person should be God and man. That the Father should not be elder than his Son; that the Son should not be inferior to the Father; that one should proceed from them both, which should be equal to them both. The facts about which they were to give evidence, were very extraordinary; as that a virgin should conceive, by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a Son; that one should be born in time, which had existed from eternity; that he should be, in appearance, as much confined or circumscribed within a place, as one of his Disciples, and yet that he should be really Omnipresent; that he should be sent with power and authority, to repeal the law that the Almighty himself had established;

blished ; that, though he was apprehended, prosecuted, condemned, and crucified in the sight of all the people of *Jerusalem* ; though he really died, and was buried ; yet he rose again from the dead on the third day ; that he ascended into heaven, and was there exalted to the greatest power and dignity, and shall at last come down from thence to judge the world.

Now, what mortal did we ever know, upon whose credit we durst believe such things as these, without such extraordinary *credentials*, as should confirm what bare human testimony could never prove ? Besides this, they were to preach down other religions ; that of the *Heathens* on one hand, which was established by law ; and that of the *Jews* on the other hand, which was tolerated, and had a great deal to be said in defence of it. For, besides its Divine institution, and the train of miracles by which it had been confirmed, it seemed to have very express promises of its perpetuity, *Jer.* xxxiii. 17.

Now, considering how tenacious mankind have always been of the religions in which they have been trained up, it was very necessary,

cessary, that the first preachers of Christianity should be fortified from Heaven, with those powerful aids of the Holy Ghost that attended them: and yet this was not all; the Religion of CHRIST had the sins and corruptions of mankind to contend with; and none could be admitted to profess it, unless he *renounced the devil, the world, and the flesh*, and promised to *keep the commandments of God all the days of his life*. It pressed such things upon its first votaries, as were great difficulties to flesh and blood: they were to forsake their dearest relations, to part with their possessions, to suffer persecution, and to sacrifice their very lives, rather than disown their Religion, or do any wicked thing. They shewed them honestly how strict their profession was; advised them to count the cost; and had some time of trial before they would admit them: and they told them plainly what would be the consequences of their apostasy from, or remissness in, their holy Religion. They were in that case to be turned out of the Church again, and shut out of the kingdom of glory too, without sincere, and as severe repentance as the case required.

Now,

Now, considering the degenerate state of the world, when all manner of wickedness was patronized by the governors, both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it could never be thought, that so strict a Religion should get much ground in the world, unless the Almighty appeared for it, and gave it credit by those extraordinary signs and wonders that did at first introduce and recommend it.

Then, as to the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost, the first preachers and professors of Christianity, besides the regard they had for the interest of this Religion in general, had each of them to take care of their own salvation in particular, by recommending themselves, in all their conduct, to the acceptance of the Almighty. And being liable to human passions, as well as others, there was also a necessity for the common and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to make them burning and shining lights in the world; and that, after they had been instrumental in saving others, they themselves should not be *cast-aways*.

But, after all these proofs of the reality and necessity of these extraordinary appearances, as well as common gifts, that no difficulty

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ficulty may be wanting, we are pressed with one of a different kind; and it is this: If this Religion be true, and the only method of salvation so much depending upon it as the eternal welfare of all mankind, and so great a part of the world being yet in darkness and infidelity, and those that profess it being very much divided about the sense of the Scriptures, and very little better in their lives and conduct than those that oppose it, there seems to be as much necessity for the presence of CHRIST with us in these, as there was in former ages. In which way of arguing there is something right, and something wrong; the consideration of which I reserve for another discourse.

Now to GOD, &c.

S E R-

S E R M O N X I .

The PROMISE of

C H R I S T ' s

Perpetual Prefence

W I T H H I S

C H U R C H .

SERMON XI.

MATTHEW XXIV. 20.
THE PROMISE OF



CHURCH.

S E R M O N XI.

MATTHEW xxviii. 20.

*And, lo, I am with you alway, even
unto the End of the World. Amen.*

I Have in a former discourse shewn you the intention of our LORD in this promise, and the accomplishment in the dispensations that followed it, both common and ordinary, and extraordinary and miraculous: the necessity of these I insisted upon, in answer to the pretence of those that from the excellency of this Religion, which was sufficient to recommend and make way for itself, are pleased to argue against that necessity.

I come now, *Thirdly*, to consider a difficulty of another kind; and it is this: If this Religion be true, and the only method of

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salvation,

salvation, so much depending upon it as the eternal welfare of all mankind, and so great a part of the world being yet in darkness and infidelity, and those that profess it being very much divided about the sense of the Scriptures, and very little better in their lives than those that oppose it, there seems to be as much necessity for the presence of CHRIST with us in these, as there was in former ages. We all find by experience so much darkness in our minds, so much perverseness in our wills, so much disorder in our passions, we are so much indisposed to that which is good, and equally inclined to that which is evil, we are so soon weary of well doing, so easily allured to sin and folly, and in so great danger of falling into perdition, that the influences of the Divine Spirit are certainly as needful *now*, as *ever they could be*.

To all which we answer, by keeping to the distinction between the *ordinary* and *miraculous* gifts of the Holy Ghost. As it must be granted, that the former are always necessary, so we may be assured they are always ready: and by these CHRIST is always present, not only with the *preachers*,
but

but all the sincere *professors* of Christianity ; to guide those to the knowlege of the truth, that are sincere and diligent in their inquiries ; to make the means of Grace effectual to those that use them as they ought to do ; to make us hate and overcome every sin, when we seriously consider the nature and consequences of it, and keep out of the way of every temptation to it ; to assist us in every duty, when we honestly set about the discharge of it ; and to enable us to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, when we are sincere and stedfast in our resolutions and endeavours so to do. And thus far we are agreed with those that would have CHRIST to be still present with us, as he was with the Apostles, and first Christians.

But as to the extraordinary gifts, and miraculous operations, of the Holy Spirit, there is not now the same occasion for them amongst us, in Christian countries. What need of them *now* to recommend that Religion that has been sufficiently confirmed by them ? Some of them have their intention supplied (in the present state of things) by human learning, and human laws, by care and judgment, by diligence and com-

mon prudence: and, as to others of them, if they were exhibited, they would be lost upon those that *hear not Moses and the Prophets.*

Indeed if it could be pretended, that any miraculous powers were necessary in these days, it would be that of healing the bodily diseases, and easing the violent pains, of poor afflicted Christians. So much Divine goodness and compassion seems to go along with the exercise of this power, that it would give people a very lovely idea of GOD and our Saviour, and recommend the Christian Religion to very great esteem and veneration.

But it is to be considered, whether we be as worthy upon whom those miracles of healing should be wrought, as they formerly were. However that be, certain it is, that all diseases were not cured by this miraculous power, even amongst the Apostles themselves. *St. Paul* had a thorn in the flesh; *Trophimus* was left at *Miletum*, sick; and *Timothy* had his frequent infirmities: and therefore well may we patiently submit to the like visitations. It is true, it would be an argument of GOD's great goodness, when we are in violent pain, to surprise us with ease,
upon

upon the presence and prayers of a minister. But what then? We are not sure, that such an instance of Divine goodness would be better improved than many others, that in the course of our lives we have met with. The goodness of God has prevented a great variety of malignant diseases, and violent deaths, to which, we must confess, our sins might have justly exposed us; and yet perhaps we are not so sensible of it, nor so much affected with it, as we ought to be. Besides, it should be considered, that the business of Divine Wisdom is to mix judgments and mercies together, and to make both conspire for our good. And where the more mild and gentle dispensations have not their designed effect, the severer instances of God's providence very often have; and therefore if our distempers were cured by miracle, the proper means of doing us good would be taken away.

But, after all, if under our afflictions we may make use of all those natural and spiritual means that are in our power, and sincerely endeavour to refer ourselves to the wise and merciful issues of God's good providence; if he do not remove them, he will

enable us to bear them with patience, and for ever reward our submission under them.

But if we consider the necessity of these extraordinary appearances of the Spirit of CHRIST, with regard to the conversion of infidel nations ; it is to be granted, that the arguments which are sufficient to satisfy us, that are brought up in the Christian Religion, may be thought insufficient to convince those that are under the prejudices of education in other religions ; and the probability of their conviction will be the less, by how much the further they are removed from all commerce and correspondence with Christian countries. This is a point that a great prelate of the last century seems to have had much in his thoughts, and has declared his opinion about it upon different occasions, in the course of his preaching, but most plainly and copiously in a sermon upon the evidence of our Saviour's resurrection, in the following words :

“ I think it very credible (says he), that
 “ if persons of sincere minds did go to
 “ preach the pure Christian Religion, free
 “ from those errors and superstitions which
 “ have crept into it, to infidel nations, that
 “ GOD

“ God would still enable such persons to
 “ work miracles, without which there would
 “ be little or no probability of success. For
 “ as the Wisdom of God is not wont to
 “ do that which is superfluous, so neither
 “ to be wanting in that which is necessary;
 “ and though the morality of the Christian
 “ Religion be admirable, and very apt to
 “ recommend itself to the reason of man-
 “ kind, yet the doctrine of the death of the
 “ Son of God would be such a stumbling-
 “ block as would be hard for them to get
 “ over; and the relation of antient miracles
 “ would not easily be admitted, by those who
 “ are utterly strangers to our histories of for-
 “ mer times; and consequently not so fit to
 “ judge of what credit and value they are. It
 “ is not good to be confident (says he), where
 “ we are not certain; but this I piously be-
 “ lieve, that God would extraordinarily
 “ countenance such an attempt by all fitting
 “ assistance, as he did the first publication
 “ of the Gospel; because the reason and
 “ necessity is plainly the same in this case,
 “ as it was at first. For, if God did not
 “ think the Apostles naked testimony, un-
 “ less it were armed with miracles, sufficient

“ for the conviction of the world, concern-
 “ ing the resurrection of CHRIST, of which
 “ themselves had been eye-witnesſes, much
 “ leſs can we expect to gain credit, who
 “ only carry the relation of thoſe antient
 “ matters of fact, attested by histories to
 “ which they are wholly ſtrangers.” Vol. 10.
 ſerm. 5. p. 157.

Thus far the archbiſhop; to which I dare
 not preſume to add any more, than to wiſh
 the experiment was made, and that we could
 have the ſatisfaction in our times to hear of
 its ſucceſs.

Finally, As to the extraordinary courage
 and comforts, with which the firſt Chriſtians
 were inſpired in the times of perſecution;
 if ever GOD ſhould again think fit to bring
 Chriſtians under the like trials, they need
 not fear but he would adminiſter the like
 ſupports: for the ſame Divine power and
 goodneſs is ſtill ready to exert itſelf in caſes
 of equal extremity. And into what elſe
 ſhall we reſolve the courage and con-
 ſtancy of ſuch great numbers of both ſexes,
 and various degrees and ages, who during
 the violent perſecutions of a *popiſh reign*,
 ſince the reformation, approached the ſtakes,
 and

and bore the flames, with joy and triumph?

Let us now reflect a little upon what we have heard.

And first, from the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost, we may infer the truth of that Religion, in confirmation of which they were wrought. If CHRIST promised to send the Holy Ghost for those purposes, and he descended accordingly upon the Apostles, and accompanied them in the work of the ministry, confirming the word they preached with the signs that followed; the consequence is very plain, that this JESUS, whom they preached, is the person that he pretended to be; that his doctrine was true, and his institutions sacred, and necessary to be observed. For since this JESUS was raised from the dead, taken up into Heaven, and there advanced to so great power and interest, as those operations of the Holy Ghost, his Advocate, demonstrate; nothing can be more evident, than the Truth and Divinity of the Religion which he instituted and established.

2. As these extraordinary effusions of the Spirit of CHRIST may convince us of the truth,

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truth, so they should engage us to live up to the demands of Christianity. The greater certainty we have, that our Religion is true, the more inexcusable we shall be, if our lives be wicked. Common sense must convince us, that the more reasonable the law, the more powerful the motives to obedience, the greater the assistances that are given us, the clearer the revelation, and the more uncontestable the evidence; the greater aggravations must attend the guilt of our negligence, or disobedience. The great design of Christianity is the reformation of mankind: all its doctrines, and all its precepts, aim at this; and nothing but this will serve to denominate us Christians, when we stand before GOD in judgment. To rely upon Christian knowlege, or faith, or charity, upon confessions or absolutions, nay, upon prayers or sacraments, or any external performances, or privileges, of our Religion, upon future repentance or conversion, upon GOD's mercy, CHRIST's merits and intercession, or upon any thing else, but a good life, led by the rule of GOD's commands, will be a fatal mistake and delusion. To trust to any thing else, or expect that any
thing

thing less will render us acceptable to GOD, through our Redeemer, would contradict the Nature of GOD, who is a Wise and Holy Being; hates every thing that is evil, and approves of nothing but that which is good. It must debase the value of holiness and virtue in the sight of GOD, below what he had for it under the ceremonial law, when it was indispensably necessary, that, together with observing the positive institutions of that dispensation, men should *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their GOD.* It would defeat the design, and destroy the main end, of the Gospel; which was to reveal the wrath of GOD against all unrighteousness, to call sinners to repentance, and to promote universal holiness of heart and life.

It was a very great sin to reject the Messiah, when he gave them so many infallible proofs of his being so: but what must it be for such as profess to believe in him, to trample upon his precepts, and do such things as modest unbelievers themselves would scorn to do? From the censure past upon those cities where most of our Saviour's

our's mighty works were done, which yet repented not, it is very evident, that the greater advantages GOD gives men, and the less improvement they make of them, the more intolerable their doom will be at the day of judgment. And wherein did their advantages exceed ours? We have several arguments to prove the truth of our Saviour's pretensions, the Divinity of his Religion, and the necessity of living up to its rules, that they could not have in our Saviour's life. We are assured of the accomplishment of his promises, and prophecies relating to his own death, resurrection, and ascension; the various distributions of the Holy Ghost; the destruction of the temple; the dispersion of the *Jews*; and the conversion and reception of the *Gentiles*: and these carry an additional evidence along with them, and add new weight to those arguments, by which repentance and a good life are pressed upon us in the Gospel.

If it be thought a greater advantage to hear our Saviour preach in person, as they did, than his ministers only, as we do; it ought to be considered, that, as to the essentials

tials of faith and holiness, CHRIST said nothing to them but what we find in the Scriptures, and which his ministers now assert and explain, in his name, and by his authority. It is true, he wrought miracles amongst them ; and those miracles are a confirmation of what we say. And if he was here in person he would not preach another Gospel, because he could not preach a better. There is, indeed, no comparison betwixt him and his ministers, as to the dignity of his Person, the innocency of his life, and his perfect knowlege of all the springs of human nature : yet we have reason to believe, that those who continue ignorant and wicked under the present means of knowlege and grace, would do the same under his sermons and exhortations : for it would not be seeing his Person, or hearing his words, though *never man spake like him*, and though to good Christians it would be the most pleasing sight they ever can, or ever wish, to see ; yet the sight or hearing would not reach the heart and conscience, without the influences of Divine Grace : and we are as sure as the word of GOD
can

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can make us, of a sufficient measure of God's Grace going along with the outward means that we enjoy.

3. And this introduces another reflection that is to be made upon the doctrine of the ordinary and perpetual assistances of the Spirit of CHRIST. If the Holy Spirit, and its common Graces, would accompany our Saviour's discourses, they will not be wanting in any of his institutions. We may depend upon the presence of GOD's Spirit with his ministers, in the execution of their sacred office, *to the end of the world.* When they by ordination set persons apart for the work of the ministry; when they preach and assert the principles of faith, and the rules of life; when they admit persons into the Church and Covenant of GOD; when they confirm those that have^t been baptized; when they administer the Holy Communion, and distribute the symbols of CHRIST's body and blood to Believers; when they go before the people in their confessions, prayers, and praises; when they admonish with prudence and charity, and rebuke with zeal and authority; when they
exercise

Ser. II. *to his Church.* 211

exercise the discipline of the Church, in order to preserve its peace and purity; when they observe upon errors and vices, and endeavour to promote knowlege and faith, sobriety and purity, justice and charity, holiness and piety; when they bless the people in the Name of CHRIST, and, in a word, discharge every part of their sacred function by his authority; it will all be vain without the presence and blessing of the Spirit of CHRIST. They speak the proper words, and do the outward acts; but this blessed Spirit must render all effectual to the information of mens minds, and the reformation of their manners, and salvation of the souls of all those that are in proper dispositions for those sacred influences. He may be resisted and ejected, but he will be offered in these sacred solemnities; and those that will not receive him, deny their Redeemer, and harden themselves to their own destruction.

When CHRIST's ministers, that are duly authorized, and regularly invested with the care of souls, have faithfully done their parts;

parts ; if people continue wicked and impenitent, they would also slight and despise our LORD himself. Those that were wilful and obstinate, did continue infidels, and wicked persons, when our Saviour preached to them : and what reason have we to think, that his success would now be better with men of the same temper ? Those that are teachable and tractable, are capable of receiving the benefit of the ordinary means of knowledge and grace, dispensed by his ministers ; and those that are otherwise, would resist his Holy Spirit, and be proof against his own personal addresses.

Various are the inferences that might be further drawn from this discourse ; as,

That the Ministers of CHRIST, and they only, have received his commission to admit persons into his Church, and to preside in all its sacred and solemn administrations ; that their office is honourable, but very chargeable ; that their success is not to be ascribed to themselves, but to the Spirit of CHRIST ; nor their reward to be measured by their success, but by their faithfulness
and

and diligence: That having mens persons in admiration, or deserting their proper pastors, upon pretence of better edification, are weakneses inconsistent with sound notions of the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, and due order, and the regular administration of discipline in the Church of CHRIST.

Hence we may draw rules to discover when we have the Spirit, and may discern what we should do to obtain it; and may easily judge where the fault lies, when, after all that CHRIST has done, that ministers can do, and that the Holy Spirit is ready to do, men are grossly ignorant, careless, or wicked, and fall at last into eternal perdition.

Finally, From hence we see, that as the present oeconomy of the Church shall determine at the last, so it shall continue to the last: although it may be persecuted, it shall not be destroyed; all the power and policy of earth and hell united shall never prevail against it.

Let us therefore always look up to Heaven, and from thence expect the continual defence of our Religion. When the powers

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of the earth rise up against it (as the case stood in the primitive times), yet CHRIST is still with it, and makes it prosper under oppression. And when princes defend it, and give their royal word to make it their chief care through the whole course of their reign (as the case at present is with us, and which gracious declaration we accept in all places, from our royal sovereign, with all thankfulness), they are, under CHRIST, the heads of it, and are to supply by good laws, and the due execution of them, the want of that extraordinary appearance of CHRIST for his Church, which determined when it was taken under their protection.

Let us always from hence expect the common and perpetual assistances of the Spirit of CHRIST, in order to make us holy in this world, and happy in the next; for, as CHRIST always has been, so he always will be, present with his Church, as to those sacred influences, *to the end of the world.*

Now to GOD, &c.

S E R.

SERMON XII.

CONCERNING

JUSTIFICATION

BY

F A I T H.



S E R M O N XII.

R O M. iii. 28.

Therefore we conclude, that a Man is justified by Faith, without the Deeds of the Law.

IT is plain, upon reading of these words, that they are a conclusion drawn from some foregoing doctrine or argument. The better to understand them,

I. It will be proper to inquire into the state of this Church, when *St. Paul* wrote this epistle.

II. To consider the premises from which he draws this conclusion.

I. As to the state of the Church when *St. Paul* wrote this epistle : It consisted of both *Jewish* and *Gentile* converts ; and the

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former insisted upon the necessity of the latter being circumcised, and profelyted to the *Jewish* Religion, to render them capable of the pardon of their sins, and acceptable to God; who, as they thought, looked upon all the world, besides the *Jews*, as unclean and abominable. So that it was needful for the Apostle to obviate the mistakes, into which they were leading them.

And to insist upon the freedom of the *Gentiles* from the *Jewish* law; that it was no wise obligatory to them; and though they should submit to circumcision, yet they would be no nearer Justification and Salvation, than they were before; he preaches up the value of CHRIST's blood, that was shed for the remission of sins; and that nothing else could recommend either *Gentile* or *Jew* to the Divine Mercy.

1. As to the *Gentiles*, they had long been guilty of such idolatries, and various other kinds of wickedness, as must needs have subjected them to the wrath of God. They had sinned against the light of nature, which if they had attended to, it would have condemned their evil courses: such as we read of, *Rom. i. 29, 30, 31, 32.* So that it was
very

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very evident, that the *Gentiles* in general were in a most wretched condition, and stood in absolute need of a Saviour; and that their only course was to fly to CHRIST by faith, to be saved from all their iniquities.

2. He then shews, how the case stood with the *Jews*; who being guilty of the same vices, must also be subject to the displeasure of the same impartial judge: and that it must be vain for them to hope, that for the sake of their forefathers, or by reason of their relation to GOD, it would fare any better with them, than it was like to do with the *Gentiles*.

Having proved then, that all, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were inexcusable transgressors, either against the law of nature, or the law of *Moses*; it must follow, that the one as well as the other stood in need of a Redeemer, &c. It is written, *There is none righteous, no not one*, Rom. iii. 10. from *Psalms* xiv. And though the *Jews*, out of partiality and self-conceit, applied all such ill characters as are drawn in Scripture to the Heathen; yet as the same did but too exactly fit themselves, the light and advantages which they

P 4 enjoyed,

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enjoyed, would very much aggravate their guilt, and ashamè them of their boasted privileges; by which they thought themselves so much superior to the *Gentiles*, Rom. iii.

19. Since then the moral character of the *Jews* as well as *Gentiles* was so wretched, neither of them could be justified by their respective laws; but both must stand condemned thereby, Rom. iii. 30. And both must be in absolute need of a Redeemer, a Saviour that should make an atonement for them, and recommend them to the infinite mercy of GOD; whose laws they had violated, and whose justice they had incensed. And such a one is JESUS CHRIST, who by his death and suffering made a sufficient Oblation and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and makes a free offer of Pardon and Grace to all that believe in him, and submit to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King. And therefore does the Apostle conclude from these premises, that there is no other way, for either *Jew* or *Gentile*, to be justified, but by Faith in CHRIST.

In further opening of which, I will endeavour to shew,

1. What it is to be justified.

2. What

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2. What that Faith is, by which men are justified. And,

3. Why Faith is so much insisted upon, in order to our Justification, as if nothing else but believing the Gospel was required of us for that purpose.

Now Justification, as it is the act of GOD, consists in not imputing to us our iniquities; *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin*, Psalm xxxii. 2.; and in overlooking the imperfections of our best services, and discharging us from the guilt of all our transgressions. But besides this forgiveness of our sins, to complete our Justification, there follows a positive act of approbation, an act of love and esteem founded upon something inherent in us, or imputed to us, as the consideration upon which GOD delights in us, and is well pleased with us. But there was nothing in us that could thus recommend us; nothing, but what needed something out of our power, to derive any worth upon, and render it acceptable to GOD. And this is the righteousness of CHRIST; CHRIST, who of GOD is made unto us righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is by his obedience that many are made righteous,
Rom.

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Rom. v. 19. This is the name by which he was to be called, *The Lord our Righteousness*, *Jerem. xxiii. 6.* It is in consideration of his obedience and righteousness that we meet with any degree of God's acceptance. Neither the works appointed by the *Levitical* law, nor those that were wrought before, or without the grace of the Gospel, whether in the state of nature, or under the *Mosaical* law ; no works of *Judaical* righteousness, whether legal or traditional how much soever esteemed by fallible men ; nor any works whatsoever performed by our own strength, and that do not spring from Faith in CHRIST, our Mediator ; can have any stroke, any weight, or consideration, in the affair of Justification and Salvation. So that Justification is a judicial act of GOD, whereby he acquits a person accused, and receives him to his favour, as if he were perfectly just and innocent : the principal cause of which is the free Grace and Mercy of GOD the Father ; and the meritorious cause of it is both the active and passive obedience of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

2. As

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2. As to the notion of Faith, it is hard to fix upon any that will include every ground, degree, and object of it; and at the same time so to determine the sense, as to distinguish it from every other kind of assent. As to the ground of it, it does not depend on Divine testimony alone; but also in part upon sense, reason, and human testimony. And as to the degree of it, a weak Faith is really Faith, and not quite to be excluded. As to the object of it, that is not so to be determined as to exclude historical, or other truths found in the Scriptures, that are of less importance than the Articles of the Creed, or practical truths, are allowed to be.

Should we, with some, make the want of clear light essential to it; that would conclude against the Faith of the Disciples, as to the articles of our LORD's Sufferings and Crucifixion, his Death and Burial, his Resurrection and Ascension; all which fell under the observation of their senses, and of which they had the most clear and undoubted evidence. Should we, on the other hand, make a certain degree of assurance essential to it, it would exclude every lower degree
of

of persuasion, which may be attended with some mixture of doubts or weakness. Should we make Faith consist in a stedfast persuasion of mind, that we are elected to Salvation by an absolute and eternal decree of God, we should fix upon a notion both groundless and dangerous. Should we make the conviction of the matters related to constitute the proper notion of Faith, this would set the historical belief of facts, related either in profane or sacred story, upon the same bottom; and determine that to be Faith which was unactive and dead, and had no kind of influence upon the life or conduct. Or should we, on the other hand, extend the signification of the word *Faith* to the fruits and effects of such a conviction; then without those fruits we should not allow the belief of all the articles of the Christian Faith, and all the matters recorded in Scripture, to pass for Faith; and yet, without doubt, what we believe upon the foundation of Divine testimony, is to be accounted Faith. But whether all other assent or persuasion, how clear and firm, how stedfast and unshaken soever it be, which is grounded upon the observation of our senses, or the con-

victions

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victions of reason, is to be excluded that idea, is the question. If so, then the existence of GOD, which is a principle pre-supposed in, and antecedent to, all Divine testimony and revelation, cannot be the object of Faith. And what men believed upon the testimony of their senses, when our Saviour was in the flesh, upon earth, would be excluded the nature and notion of Faith.

These observations shew how difficult it is to describe Faith, and at the same time so to distinguish it, as that the account given of it may be applicable to every kind and degree of Faith, and to nothing else; to include the root, and branches, and fruit of it, its previous dispositions, and distinguishing characters; and to exclude all that is dead and counterfeit, ineffectual and worthless.

And therefore, to stand clear of these difficulties, Divines of great judgment have defined Faith to be an assent of the mind, to either speculative, practical, or historical truths; whether they be discovered by sense or reason, or proposed upon either divine or human testimony; human testimony immediately, but divine testimony principally, and
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in the last resort. Believing in JESUS CHRIST is an assent to those revelations that are made about the Second Person in the blessed Trinity; as that he is the eternal Son of GOD, of the same substance, and of equal power and glory, with the Father; that he is our LORD; that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the blessed Virgin; that he suffered, and was crucified; died, and was buried; that his death was a sacrifice offered to the Father for our Redemption; and that the Father accepted of it, as if we had suffered, each for his own transgressions; that he rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven; and that he is there exalted to all possible honour, and glory, and power; that he shall come down from thence, at the Last Day, to judge the world.

Believing in the Holy Ghost is an assent to those revelations that are made in the Scriptures about him: that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are One ever-blessed GOD; that the Holy Ghost, considered as the Third Person in the blessed Trinity, is CHRIST'S Advocate in his Church upon earth; that he was sent to convince the world of sin,
of

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of righteousness, and judgment ; that he applies to the faithful all the blessings and benefits of CHRIST's death and passion ; that he dispenses Grace to those who desire it, and use proper means appointed to obtain it ; that he regenerates our natures, and restores us to the Image of GOD ; that he accompanies the means appointed for that purpose, to enlighten our minds, to rectify our wills, to regulate our passions, to make us steadfast in the profession of the Faith, and in our resolution to lead Virtuous and Christian lives ; to make us abound, and persevere, in the work of the LORD. This Faith, as it has the Holy Catholick Church for its object, is a firm persuasion, that CHRIST, during his ministry in the flesh, gathered to himself a Church, consisting of persons who believed him to be the *Messias* ; and united them to him, as members to the head ; that the Apostles, and their successors, enlarged it ; that it existed ever since, and ever shall ; and that all the power of hell will never be able to root it out of the world ; that its head is perfectly holy, and all his members are really, though imperfectly so ; that the design of our admission
into

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into it, is to make *us* holy ; that all its institutions, and administrations, have the same end in view ; that it extends to all nations, is the sacred depository of all necessary truth ; that therein we are furnished with all grace, to enable us to yield all due obedience to our LORD and Saviour ; that all the true members of this Church have communion with GOD, have his Image restored to them, are the objects of his care and love, are his servants, his friends, and children ; that they have fellowship also with the Son of GOD ; that as he assumed their nature, so they are transformed into his likeness, are very members of his body, are one with him, and he with them ; that they have fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who dwells in them, and by this principle of Faith new moulds them, quite changes and renews them, fits them for all conditions, strengthens them in all temptations, comforts them in tribulations. This Faith joyfully embraces, and stedfastly depends upon, the promise of pardon and remission of all sin, how great soever in degree, how many soever in number, upon our stedfast Faith in CHRIST, and sincere repentance of all our transgressions ; and this
upon

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upon the sole account of the satisfaction and intercession of our blessed LORD and Saviour. It relies upon the truth and power of GOD, for the resurrection of the flesh, and for everlasting life after death.

Now, as Justification consists in the forgiveness of sins, and the approbation of our persons and services; and pronounces or declares us to be living members of CHRIST, the true children of GOD, and heirs of everlasting life and glory; and as Faith is a firm and stedfast belief of that which GOD has revealed to us, concerning the Creation of the world, and the Redemption of mankind, or the Sanctification of GOD's elect, what he has revealed to us of the nature of his Church, of the dignity of Christians, of their duties or privileges, of the way and method of salvation opened and established by our Saviour;

III. We are, in the last place, to inquire why Justification, in the sense wherein we find it taken in the New Testament, is so much ascribed to Faith, as if nothing else was necessary for that purpose. Now the reasons of this are these, and such as these that follow:

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1. In the days of the Apostles, and frequently since, many who heard the Gospel, had time for no more than a declaration and confession of their hearty assent to it; and it was not thought fit, that they should be left to uncertainty, as to the point of salvation, who had wanted an opportunity, before that, of hearing, and then only wanted the opportunity of living, according to the direction of the Gospel. They were by Faith, as Baptism was annexed to it, put into a state of holiness and salvation.

2. This their faith was the spring and principle of all virtue, and godliness of living. Why then should not a person have the assurance of pardon and acceptance, who had the root of the matter in him, which, being nourished and strengthened, would not fail to bring forth good fruit, and secure a holy and good life? But, without Faith, there is no security of obedience: Unless a man believe in GOD, he will not serve or worship him, or love or fear him: Unless a man believe in CHRIST, he will not live like a Christian. Who will regard the doctrine of CHRIST, that does not believe he was a *teacher sent from Heaven?* *John iii. 2.*

Who

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Who will depend upon the sacrifice and intercession of CHRIST, that does not believe him to be our Priest, who offered himself a sacrifice to the Father, and is now at God's right hand *making continual intercession for us*? 1 Pet. ii. 24. Hebr. vii. 25. 1 John ii. 2. Who will obey the precepts of CHRIST, that does not believe him to be our King and Lawgiver? Who will pay any regard to the ministers of CHRIST, who neither believe that they have received any authority from CHRIST, nor that he had any to give? Who would in Baptism dedicate himself to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that does not believe in them? Who will trust in CHRIST, that does not believe his promises, or power, or goodness? Who would be afraid of his animadversion, that did not believe he was to be our Judge? Who would be solicitous about the way of salvation, that did not believe any particular method was appointed for that purpose? What man would renounce the world, and the flesh, unless he believed Heaven to be preferable to all the offers, which they can make him; and hell more to be dreaded, than all the hardships to which they can

expose him? Besides, as Faith has Baptism annexed to it, we are by our own act and deed dedicated to God, and under the most strict and solemn obligations to perform our baptismal covenant; in which we promised to devote ourselves, our lives, our powers, and possessions, our *all*, to the honour and service of the Almighty; to devote ourselves to holiness and purity, to perseverance and constancy in the profession of the true Religion; to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; to attend to CHRIST as our Prophet, to depend upon him as our Priest, to honour and obey him as our King.

3. By this means the excellency and moderation of the Gospel appeared; no harder terms being insisted upon, than hearing, considering, and consenting to its proposals, and trusting the affair of salvation to our great High-Priest, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Now this consideration is as easy as it is reasonable. Is any thing easier than to open our eyes and see; to open our ears, and lend our attention to the Gospel of Truth? That Gospel which is so well attested, has all the advantages that absolute veracity, and infallible authority, can give it. What can be more

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more easy to us, than, out of a sense of our own weakness and impotence, and the power and sufficiency of our Redeemer, to rely upon him alone for salvation? When we consider, and confess ourselves unable to discover the truth, to think, to desire to do good, without the influences and assistances of Heaven, which our LORD purchased for us; and when we are sensible, that in CHRIST is all fulness of truth, of power, of merit, of good will, of every thing we want or wish; what an easy condition of Justification and Happiness must it be, to believe in, and depend upon, CHRIST, for salvation? When we have the testimony of God, how can we do otherwise than believe it? Having his promises, how can we help relying upon them? Being vile and worthless of ourselves, how ready should we be, if we consider our own happiness, to lay hold upon the merits of our blessed Redeemer? Being sensible of our own guilt, what desires must we have, what temptations must we be under, to get an interest in the satisfaction and atonement of our Saviour?

If our obedience be so imperfect, as we must all know and confess it to be; what can

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we do better, than believe in CHRIST, and trust, that, for the sake of his perfect righteousness, our sincere, though imperfect endeavours will be accepted? If we are defiled and disfigured by our sins, if we are so infinitely fordid and loathsome to ourselves, when we consider the degeneracy of our natures, the depravity and deformity that our sins have left behind them; what can we more naturally desire, than to be adorned with the robes of CHRIST's righteousness?

4. This was the means to take men off themselves, and the creature, and to silence all pretence of merit, and to rest the matter upon the goodness and mercy, the promise and veracity, of GOD, and our Saviour. And this is the sense of our Church, in the second part of the *homily* of salvation, which thus expresses herself; *viz.* " This saying, That
" we be justified by Faith only, freely, and
" without Works, is spoken for to take
" away clearly all merit of our works, as
" being unable to deserve our Justification
" at GOD's hands, and thereby most plainly
" to express the weakness of man, and the
" goodness of GOD; the great infirmity
" of ourselves, and the might and power
" of

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“ of GOD ; the imperfection of our own
“ Works, and the most abundant Grace of
“ our Saviour CHRIST ; and therefore
“ wholly to ascribe the merit, and deserv-
“ ing of our Justification unto CHRIST
“ only, and his most precious blood-shed-
“ ding.”

“ This Faith, the Holy Scripture teach-
“ eth us ; this is the strong rock and foun-
“ dation of Christian Religion ; this doc-
“ trine all the ancient fathers of CHRIST’S
“ Church do approve ; this doctrine ad-
“ vanceth and setteth forth the true glory
“ of CHRIST, and beateth down the vain-
“ glory of man ; this whosoever denieth,
“ is not to be accounted for a Christian
“ man, nor for a setter-forth of CHRIST’S
“ glory, but for an adversary to CHRIST,
“ and his Gospel, and for a setter-forth of
“ mens vain-glory.”

When we thus subdue our own vanity
and conceit, the pride of human wisdom
and understanding, to the acknowledgement
of the truth of the Gospel, and submission
to the established way and method of sal-
vation ; when our imaginations and human

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reason-

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reasonings are cast down, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of GOD, 2 Cor. x. 5. when every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of CHRIST; we are in the most proper disposition for the influences and operations of the Spirit of GOD, for sanctification and life eternal. When we hear and understand what GOD's righteousness is, and go not about to establish our own, but submit ourselves to the righteousness of GOD, 2 Cor. v. 21. when we renounce our own righteousness, which is defective in its motive, imperfect in its degree, unworthy of GOD's acceptance, unable to carry us to Heaven; and when, through the Faith of CHRIST, we put on the righteousness which is of GOD through Faith, Phil. iii. 9. this placing all our hopes and confidence in CHRIST, and believing in the sufficiency of his merits, and the prevalency of his mediation and intercession, is the temper, that of all others, is the most proper to render us fit habitations for the Spirit of GOD, and most susceptible of the impressions which the Gospel is designed to make upon us.

These,

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These, and such as these, are the reasons, why such glorious things are said of Faith, and why Justification is ascribed to it, in such a manner, as if the whole matter of salvation rested upon it.

S E R.

These, and such as these, are the reasons
why such glorious things are said of him
and why his name is ascribed to him
in such a manner, as if the whole manner of
his life were a miracle.

THE

Life of Jesus Christ
as recorded in the Gospels
and the Acts of the Apostles
with a commentary
on the same.

THE

Life of Jesus Christ
as recorded in the Gospels
and the Acts of the Apostles
with a commentary
on the same.

THE

SERMON XIII.

THE
TERMS and CONDITIONS

Upon which the

G O S P E L

O F F E R S

Remission of S I N S.

SERMON XIII.

THE

TERMS and CONDITIONS



GOSSET

OF

Remission of SINS.

S E R M O N XIII.

A C T S xiii. 38.

*Be it known unto you therefore, Men
and Brethren, that through this
Man is preached unto you the For-
giveness of Sins.*

I Shall not stand to observe where, or before whom, or upon what occasion, the Apostle St. Paul speaks these words ; but refer you to the foregoing parts of the chapter for your information.

It is sufficient to observe, That they were delivered in a publick assembly, to an audience which, although of a different Religion from us, yet did in this agree with us, that they were sinners, and stood in need of Divine pardon.

And

And in those words the inspired preacher publishes in the Name of his LORD and Master an act of indemnity to them, and not only to them, but to all that are qualified for the benefit of it.

It is a matter of infinite concern to us as well as them, to give ear to the doctrine of the Remission of Sins. For we must confess, that “we have erred and strayed
“ from the ways of God like lost sheep. We
“ have followed too much the devices and
“ desires of our own hearts. We have offended
“ [in thought, word, and deed], against his
“ Holy Laws. We have left undone those
“ things which we ought to have done ;
“ and have done those things which we
“ ought not to have done ; and there is no
“ health in us.”

I shall endeavour therefore, in this discourse, to lay before you the Terms and Conditions, upon which the Remission of Sins is offered to us in the Gospel ; that those that are resolute and habitual sinners may not presume, and that those that are humble and penitent may not despair.

I. Now the first of those Terms is Faith in CHRIST, *Acts* x. 43. *To him give all the*
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*Prophets witness, that through his Name
whosoever believeth in him shall receive Re-
mission of Sins.*

This Faith includes the belief of those things that are related in the Holy Scriptures of JESUS CHRIST ; as that he was the only Son of GOD ; that in his Conception and Incarnation, in his Birth and Life, in his Passion and Crucifixion, in his Death and Burial and Resurrection, in his Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation to all that glory and power that his human nature was capable of, he exactly answered the accounts that are there given of him ; and that in him the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, relating to the Messias, received their complete and precise accomplishment.

It includes the belief of all that the Scriptures say of him as to his person or authority, as to what he did, and said, and suffered, in this world, and is now doing in heaven for us.

It includes the belief of all those things that this Divine Person delivered to the world ; that he really was what he gave out himself to be ; that he had the authority, or the commission, to which he pretended ;

tended ; that the doctrines which he taught are infallibly true ; that the precepts which he issued out, bind us as the Laws of the Eternal God ; that the Scriptures, which he acknowledged, are to be received as the word of God ; that the prophecies which he uttered have been already fulfilled, or shall hereafter be precisely accomplished ; that his promises will be punctually performed, to those that observe the conditions upon which they are made ; and that his threatenings will be certainly executed upon those infidels or wicked persons whom they concern.

This Faith includes a firm dependence upon this JESUS for Pardon, Grace, and Glory, when we do what is required of us ; when we go to him ; abide in him ; obey his Laws ; and govern our hearts and lives by the rules that he has given us.

II. Another Term or Qualification for the pardon of mens sins is Repentance. And therefore do the Apostles of CHRIST thus address the people, *Acts iii. 19. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*

Now

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Now this repentance supposes and includes a sense or conviction of mens sins, which results from the serious consideration of their ways, and comparing their lives with the Law of GOD. This is the first step to repentance; *Lam. iii. 40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* When true penitents become sensible of their sins, they are touched with remorse, and are truly ashamed to reflect upon them. This is their language, in *Jer. iii. 25. We lie down in our shame; and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God.*

But is not all sin shameful? And whoever is guilty of it, and reflects upon it, and considers that both God and the world is sensible of it, and condemns him for it, must needs be out of countenance, and blush to think of it; although he may persist in it, and repeat it, and grow more impudent and shameless every day.

It is true this may be the case, and too frequently is; but the shame and sorrow of true penitents operate so strongly upon their minds, as to make them detest and loath themselves, and their sins.

It happens to them according to that of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, xx. 43. *They shall remember their ways, and all their doings, wherein they have been defiled; and they shall loath themselves in their own sight, for all their evils that they have committed.*

But although this may be the case for a time, yet it may work off by degrees; and they may recover a better opinion of themselves afterwards, especially if they are easy in their fortunes, and prosperous in the world; and it has been too frequently observed, that such sentiments are not of any long continuance. Men cannot be supposed to continue long the objects of their own abhorrence. Self-love and fondness return too naturally to let such passions be long-lived.

It is possible indeed, that they may recover a better opinion of themselves, and have more reason for it; but if they are sincerely penitent, they will never have any other sentiments of sin, but as of a most vile and detestable, odious and abominable thing, from which they will fly as from the plague, or a serpent. And their reflections upon their offences will extort the confession of them

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to heaven or earth, as there may be occasion.

We see in the case of *David*, *Psalm xxxii*. 3, &c. when he kept silence, and only thought of his transgressions, revolving in his distracted mind the evils that he had committed, his bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long; the hand of God was heavy upon him day and night; and his moisture was like the drought in summer.

In such a sad and sorrowful condition he was, that he could think of no expedient so likely to restore him to peace and ease again, as to acknowledge his sin unto God, and not to hide his iniquity from him. This resolution he takes, to confess his sins unto the LORD, and so he forgave the iniquity of his sin.

But as in many sins there is a double offence, one against God, and another against man; those that are truly penitent will confess their sins to all that are offended and injured thereby, not only to God, but to their offended neighbour, in private or publick, as the case requireth.

And whether they be against GOD or their neighbour, when their consciences are grieved and burdened with the weight thereof, they will also do as the Church advises; viz.

At the same time that they lay open their frailties and follies, and faults, before the most merciful Father, they will also cry fervently to Heaven for pardon and reconciliation, in the name and for the sake of their Saviour, who died to recommend all true penitents to the compassion and mercy of his Father.

So does the Psalmist, after he has confessed and bewailed his degeneracy and sin, in *Psalm* li. 3, &c. he prays to GOD to purge him with hyssop, that he may be clean; to wash him, that he may become whiter than snow, &c.

Thus did *Daniel*, in chap. ix. ver. 4, &c. after he had confessed his sin, and the sin of the people, that they had committed iniquity, and done wickedly, and rebelled, by departing from the precepts, and from the judgments of GOD; that they had not hearkened to his servants the Prophets, which spake

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in the name of GOD, &c. he at last thus addresses the Almighty, ver. 16. *O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain, &c.*

O our good GOD! hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications; and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the LORD's sake.

And yet the business of repentance does not end here; for those that are thus truly sensible of, and sorry for their sins, that sincerely hate and detest them, that humbly confess them, and implore the Divine pardon for them, do also steadfastly resolve against them. To this purpose the admonition of *Elihu*, in *Job xxxiv. 31*, &c. was very proper and pertinent: *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

And yet the main business is still behind; and that is, acting up to those resolutions, in avoiding sin, with all its temptations and occasions, as much as may be, and perform-

ing every part of their known duty both to God and the world. It is this that the penitent has in his view and purpose from the very beginnings of his repentance. It is to this that the promise is made, *Ezekiel xviii. 27. When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*

He forsakes his sins against God; and does what he can to take off the scandal he has given by them.

He makes restitution of all that he has unjustly gotten from man; and makes the best satisfaction and restitution he is able for all the injuries that he has done to any man's person, or estate, or reputation.

The *third* condition of the pardon of Heaven is mens forgiveness of those that commit trespasses against them; a point which seems not to have been well considered by those that have expressly treated of it in the LORD's Prayer.

There we pray, that God would forgive us, &c.

And our Saviour has positively declared, *That if we forgive men their trespasses, our heavenly*

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heavenly Father will also forgive us ; but if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our Father forgive our trespasses, Mat. vi. 14, 15.

This is a matter that is to be treated with the utmost care, in order to the satisfaction of weak Christians ; who, when they consult their own sentiments, and find that they cannot quietly sit down with the wrongs that they have received, without the satisfaction they require of their offending brethren, or which they know they are intitled to by the law, may, on one hand, fear, that God will not freely and fully forgive them their trespasses, but proceed against them by the measures of his justice and severity, and that in this case they will be ruined to all eternity.

And on the other hand, when men find, that they can heartily pass by the trespasses that their neighbours have committed against them, and intirely forgive them the wrongs they have done, without insisting upon any kind of terms with them ; they may be disposed to think, that God will absolutely forgive them their trespasses against him, without insisting upon any terms, without

any acknowledgement, any satisfaction, or any conditions of pardon.

Both which are very dangerous mistakes; to prevent which, we should consider this forgiveness of mens trespasses against us, both as to the inward and the outward parts of it.

As to the former, we are required, on one hand, not to wish any manner of evil to those that injure us, nor to take any pleasure in their misfortunes or disappointments, &c.

And on the other, to be benevolent to them, to wish them well, to love them with an undissembled affection, after the same manner as we love ourselves; and that we rejoice in their true felicity, and especially in their repentance and amendment.

And as to the other outward part of it, that is to be expressed in words or actions; it is to be determined in a great measure by the behaviour of those that have injured us; by the degrees, nature, and circumstances of the offence, or the temper and disposition betrayed thereby. And more particularly it may be considered under this distinction, of what we *may* do by the *permission* of the Gospel,

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Gospel, and of what we *must* do in obedience to it.

Now we may in some proportion expect the same from them, that God expects from us. As to the debts they owe us, in the proper notion of the word, we may expect the payment of them, in the whole, or in part, as we know they are able to do it. And as to injuries and offences, that betray ill designs, and bad principles, if they are smaller, yet may we reprove them, and treat those that committed them with more reserve and caution, distinguishing between them and our truest friends; and if greater, we may also insist upon their acknowledgment, their desires of pardon and reconciliation, and their undoing the injury as much as in justice and equity they are obliged to. This we may be allowed to do, because God requires all those to do thus, that have offended their brethren; and he insists upon all this as the condition of his forgiving us; and we are not any-where required to forgive men their trespasses, any further than God has promised to forgive us ours. And in case they refuse thus to do, we are allowed by the Gospel to oblige and compel them

them to it, by a legal prosecution. This may be argued from the nature of Civil Government, and the power of the Civil Magistrate, derived from GOD to restrain the evil, and protect the good.

This is what we may do by the allowance of the Gospel. Let us now consider what we must do in obedience to it.

And first, with respect to insolvent debtors, we must forbear or forgive, in whole, or in part, as the case may require. And with regard to trespasses, we must pity and pardon those that proceed only from weakness and ignorance, and are withal light, and do us no great damage; and look upon them not to be so much their faults as their misfortunes.

And we must use the following cautions in prosecuting such offenders, whose causes we are allowed to refer to the cognizance of the law.

We must make an impartial and just estimate of the injury, and not aggravate matters to make them worse, or look worse than they are.

We must be satisfied of the justice of our cause, or at least, that it is not unjust; for
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in that case we should neither sue, nor stand
suit.

We must use our endeavours to prevent a
suit, either by offering satisfaction, if we
have done wrong ; or by accepting of it when
it is offered ; or by proposing or consenting
to a reference.

We should go to law with reluctance ;
sorry for the occasion given, and the neces-
sity we find ourselves under to do it.

We should go to law with a good inten-
tion ; and neither make it minister to our
revenge, or pride, or passion, prejudice or
malice ; nor use it only to incommode others,
when we can do ourselves no good thereby.

The ends we should have in our recourse
to it, should be the honour of God and
Religion, to check injustice, or bad examples,
in criminal cases ; and to settle a just balance
of power or property ; or to assure ourselves,
or satisfy others, of our rights in civil cases.

And when the issue is joined, we should
manage honourably, neither rendering the
suit vexatious or expensive, nor delaying
justice, nor circumventing our adversary, nor
making unfair suggestions to witnesses, nor
cross-biting, bantering, or baffling them, nor
threat-

threatening, nor discouraging them, from speaking the truth.

And finally, after a fair tryal, we must acquiesce in the verdict, let the scales turn which way they will.

But when those that have committed any trespasses against us, do of their own accord, or by the perswasion of their friends, or through the fear of justice, acknowledge their offences, desire our pardon and reconciliation, and undo the injury as much as they can; we should treat them with civility and kindness, and all the respect that the case requires, not remembring their mistakes to the prejudice of our charity, or to their disadvantage; but be as perfectly reconciled to them, as we have reason to hope GOD is.

But let the case be ever so ill, we must always abstain from all private and personal revenge; desire GOD to bless them that injure, that hate us; do justice to their characters, and never abuse them, so much as in words; we should be ready to do them good as we have opportunity, in feeding, cloathing, or refreshing them; we should pray for them; and, in a word, our treatment

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ment of them should be such as is dictated to us by our Christian charity and prudence, our regard to God's glory, and the true interest and benefit of all men, and especially of their own.

S E R.

ment of them should be such as is dictated to us by our Christian charity and piety, our regard to God's glory, and the good interest and benefit of all men, and especially of their own.

And now, my friends, let us consider the nature of the sin which is the subject of this sermon. It is a sin which is committed by all men, and which is the cause of all our misery and sorrow. It is a sin which is the root of all our evil, and which is the source of all our guilt.

It is a sin which is the cause of all our misery and sorrow, and which is the root of all our evil, and which is the source of all our guilt. It is a sin which is the cause of all our misery and sorrow, and which is the root of all our evil, and which is the source of all our guilt.

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SERMON XIV.

AGAINST

Rash Judgment.

SERMON XIV

SERMON XIV

AGAINST



Ralph J. ...

S E R M O N XIV.

LUKE vi. 37.

*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged;
condemn not, and ye shall not be
condemned.*

AMONGST other defects and faults, too common among Christians, want of charity, and a disposition to make bold and rash conjectures, with respect to the spiritual estate of other people, is too plain and frequent to escape our observation. And of all the occasions upon which this betrays itself, the severities of Providence, with regard to mens persons, or fortunes, is one of the most noted.

No sooner do men hear of some uncommon calamity or distress, that any one is

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visited with, but they conclude that this, and the other, was the provocation upon which it was sent. And if they be not so particularly acquainted with the persons and characters that are so remarkably visited, yet whatever is the occasion of it, they are but too forward to draw this conclusion, That G O D would not have distinguished them by those visitations, if they had not given some either open, or secret, provocation. Now this is a quality, so wrong in itself, and so bad in its consequences, that it must be worth our while to inquire into the spring of it; to shew that whatever causes it is to be resolved into, there is so much uncharitableness, not to say, injustice, so much uncertainty and falsity, in such kind of censures and conclusions; they are so contrary to the proper use that should be made of them; that it is at least a very commendable undertaking, to observe upon this practice, and the ill qualities and principles, from which it flows. And since it is natural for such uncommon visitations, as we often hear of, or sometimes see, to make very deep and strong impressions upon us; it will be very proper to consider, what kind of
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of reflections, on these sad occasions, will be most innocent in themselves, most useful to us, and most pleasing to GOD.

In discoursing upon this argument, I will confine myself to these two points:

I. I will consider the danger of making an ill use of mens calamities and afflictions.

II. I will shew the right use that ought to be made of them.

I. then, Let us consider the danger of being too forward in drawing arguments of mens extraordinary guilt, from the observation of their great sufferings.

And here let us, *first*, inquire, what it is that disposes men so to do. And, *secondly*, shew, whence the uncertainty or uncharitableness of such conclusions appears.

1. Let us consider what it is that betrays men into these great mistakes. And (amongst other causes) they are to be ascribed to mens uncharitable dispositions, to melancholy, enthusiasm or bigotry; to self-love, or self-ignorance; to spiritual pride; to an ill-grounded zeal; or to their narrow conceptions of the Nature and Providence of GOD.

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An uncharitable disposition of mind towards other persons makes every cross or disappointment, every disaster or affliction, which they meet with, pass for a judgment. Where-ever there is prejudice, or want of Christian affection, persons as seldom *think*, as they *speak*, well of others.

Melancholy, enthusiasm, or violent bigotry, does also dispose people to make these rash Judgments, and to conclude, that those who are not of their temper, profession, or party, must stand exposed to the displeasure of God.

Self-love and self-ignorance is another occasion of them. Men will not look into their own bad hearts, and consider what they may justly charge themselves with, and what God might justly punish them for. They will not see their own faults, or else they would be forced to confess, that they deserve whatever others endure. So great is their partiality, that they can easily persuade themselves, that the afflictions *they* meet with are sent as Trials to *them*, when at the same time they will not scruple to pronounce the like to be Judgments upon others.

Spiritual

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Spiritual pride, and an affectation of appearing either more innocent, or more knowing, than others, betrays men into these rash Judgments. When they conclude a person or family under the displeasure of God, and that they suffer nothing but what is their due, their partiality and self-love will persuade them to think, that as they themselves are exempted from the like calamity, they are not guilty of the like, or as great offences; and at the same time they seem to think themselves, and affect to be thought, more quick-sighted, and more sensible of the reasons of GOD's proceedings, than others are, who have more modesty, and greater charity, than to give into such peremptory, bold, and unwarrantable censures.

Another cause of them is, an ignorant and ill-grounded zeal, which though it may really spring from an hearty affection to God and Religion, it is yet as a luxuriant branch; appears well to the eye, but bears no good fruit. So such persons seem to have the honour of GOD much at heart, and from their weakness and ignorance conclude the seeming severities of Providence

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to be intended as Divine Judgments. They undertake to justify God's proceedings upon their own mistaken views and principles; and to assign such reasons for them, as may be not only very different from, but even directly opposite to, the reasons that determined the Almighty to take such measures as they misinterpret.

Finally, These uncharitable conclusions are frequently owing to mens narrow conceptions of the Nature and Providence of God, measuring his thoughts and proceedings by their standard; and concluding, because in such cases, and in such circumstances, as they apprehend persons to be under, *they* should treat them thus, or so, that therefore God must do the like.

These are some of the causes that dispose men to make partial, and weak, and wrong Judgments, on the dispensations of Divine providence.

2. Let us now consider from whence we may infer the uncertainty and uncharitableness of such conclusions.

And, *first*, This may be argued from our ignorance of the reasons of God's proceedings with men, when such reasons are not revealed to us. We may indeed conclude,

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clude, that He loves good men, and approves of their good works ; but we cannot conclude, that He will never correct them, or that He will not do it with some severity, any more than we can conclude, that a wise and good man will never chastise his beloved son. We may also conclude, that God hates sin, and can by no means approve of an obstinate and incorrigible offender. But we cannot conclude, that He should not spare such an one, and give him time to see and forsake his evil ways. We cannot conclude, that God loves, and is well pleased with those, that are spared ; or that He is angry with those that are visited with the greatest afflictions, or even violent deaths. No ! good men and bad may fall under the like circumstances ; and God may have different views with regard to *one* and the *other*. They may both be in what we esteem very good circumstances, and the good man comes under them, because God loves him, and delights to make every thing conspire even for his outward happiness and prosperity : but the other may be receiving his portion in this life, and is to expect nothing hereafter. They may both fall under what we esteem very bad circumstances, and these may be to *one* an

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earnest of what he is ere long to receive from the justice of an angry GOD; and to the *other*, the reasonable and salutary chastisements of an indulgent Father. We may certainly conclude, that GOD will never afflict, or punish, any man undeservedly; but we ought not to conclude, that there is the same difference in the moral state of one who is, and another who is not, afflicted, as there is betwixt the outward condition of the one, and the other. A good man may deserve what he suffers, and a bad man much more, and at present go unpunished. And upon these accounts it is that *Solomon*, who made very just observations, tells us, *Eccles. viii. 14. There be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.* And in the ninth chapter, ver. 1, 2, 3. *No man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before him. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth,*
as

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as he that feareth an oath: there is one event unto all. Not that GOD is an unrighteous Governor; not that he will not render to every man according to his works, one time or other; but he doth not always do this immediately: nay, he doth not always do it in this world; but sometimes refers good men to the rewards, and wicked men to the punishment, of a future state; for that is the state of retribution to both good men and bad.

2. But, *secondly*, The uncertainty or uncharitableness of these Judgments appears from the mistakes we are liable to fall into, about what we call good and evil. We may think a long and healthful life a great good, and a natural and peaceable death a great blessing; and, on the other hand, a life exercised with sorrows, and broken health, or snapt suddenly off by the sword or pestilence, a very great misfortune. Whereas these are good, or evil, according to the moral state of those persons, to whose share they fall. Afflictions, such as those of *Job* or *Lazarus*, are no evils, or arguments of GOD's displeasure with good men; nor the ease and plenty of the rich man, any real good,

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good, or the arguments of GOD's respect and favour. To good men, death, and even sudden death, and that in any form, is no evil, but an inlet to their felicity and reward. And to bad men, as such, life, and long life, is no happiness, but an opportunity of treasuring up the Divine vengeance, which will fall more heavily upon them, the longer it is delayed.

3. But, *thirdly*, The uncertainty and unwarrantableness of these forward Judgments appear from the assurance we have, that they were false when made, in *some* instances, and would have been false had they been made in *others*. The case of *Job*, and the uncharitable censures of his friends, is so very well known, that there is no need to enlarge upon it. And so is the case of *St. Paul*, Acts xxviii. who when he had escaped shipwreck, was seized with a *viper that came out of the heat, and fastened on his hand*. Which the Barbarians no sooner saw, but *they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live*. Now in this case we know it was a rash and groundless censure; and it would have

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have been no less so, had he fallen down dead, as they expected.

We have another very extraordinary passage in the Gospel of St. *Luke*, chapter xiii. verse 1, 2, &c. from which we may, by the authority of our Saviour, warn people from making a Judgment of mens sins by their calamities and sufferings. *There were present with Jesus some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that these were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay. What provocation Pilate had to do so barbarous a thing, does not appear in the Gospel. But it seems he surpris'd these Galileans, when they were offering their sacrifices to God, and mingled the blood of the offerers with that of the beasts which they offered. And our Saviour hearing the story of it, and discovering, or suspecting, that they at that time did, or in future times men would, pass*
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hard censures upon them, and conclude them to be extraordinary finners, whom GOD permitted to be so cruelly treated and slaughtered, he takes occasion to vindicate them from so hard a censure, and to assure them, that it could not be concluded from their sufferings, no, not from their sudden and violent death, that they were greater sinners than other *Galileans*, that suffered no such things. And lest they should think, that though such Judgments are not to be made upon the case of those that fall or perish by the hands of the powers of the earth, or by wicked men, and free agents; yet when they are struck by the hand of GOD, or perish by some fortuitous event, it is no breach of charity to make such conclusions; our LORD puts them in mind of eighteen persons, that were killed by the fall of a tower; and assures them, that it could not be concluded from this disaster, that *they were sinners above all the men that dwelt at Jerusalem*; and that, if they supposed them to be so, they were much mistaken, and made a wrong use of such kind of providences or occurrences. We may add to this, the consideration of
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another passage in the Gospel of St. *John*, chapter ix. verse 1, 2, 3. *As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his Disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of GOD should be made manifest in him.* These Disciples, according to an opinion of some credit amongst their countrymen the *Jews*, did believe, that mens sufferings were the consequences of their own or their parents sins; and that men had committed such offences in a *pre-existent* state, before they came into this world, which were visited upon them after they came *hither*. Now, what says our Redeemer to this question? How does he solve it? Not by granting or assigning either the one or the other of these to have been the reason. This calamity, with which the poor man was born, was not the consequence of any sin he had committed in that supposed state of *pre-existence*, nor of any particular sin that his parents had committed; but it was thus ordered to be, by the good Providence of God,

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to give our LORD himself an opportunity of working so great a miracle as this, of curing, or giving sight to, a person that was born blind; and so confirming the faith of those that believed on him, and convincing those that believed not, that *He* had the Divine commission, and was therefore to be regarded.

Nay, where the difficulties and disasters men have met with, were really drawn down upon them, by their own transgression of one particular kind, they have been falsely ascribed to imagined sins of another; as in the case of *Shimei's* cursing *David*, 2 Sam. xvi. 8. and imputing the rebellion raised against him by his son, to his own cruelty to the house of *Saul*. *Shimei* himself was of the same family; and when the crown was translated from *that* house to the house of *David*, *Shimei's* hopes were blasted; and, being disappointed and disaffected, he maliciously and enviously ascribes the calamities of *David* (to which he was exposed on a different account) to the just Judgment of GOD upon *him*, for usurping the crown and empire, that *he* would have still continued in his own family.

And

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And as in these cases they *were* wrong, so in other cases we know with equal certainty, that they *would have been* wrong; as in the murder of *Abel*; the death of king *Josiah*; and the wretched state of *Lazarus*. *Abel* was suddenly cut off by his wicked brother; but if we conclude, that he had by some extraordinary guilt provoked God to deliver him up to so untimely a death, we contradict the Scriptures, which tell us, that God *had respect to Abel, and his offering*; and because He shewed not the same respect to the person and offering of his brother, out of spight and envy, he rose up against him, and slew him. *Josiah* was cut off in the wars, and met with a sudden death by the hand of his enemies: but if from hence any ever did conclude, that *he* had some way or other provoked God, or else he would not have delivered him into the hand of one that was an enemy, both to God and his people; such a conclusion would be manifestly wrong. For the history of that young prince exhibits to us a pattern of extraordinary piety and virtue; and we have this character of him left upon record in the Bible, that *like unto him there*
was

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was no king before him that turned to the Lord, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him, 2 Kings xxiii. 25. If any should conclude from the miserable condition of *Lazarus*, that he was as loathsome by his sins in the sight of *G O D*, as he was by his sores in the eyes of men, it would be a false and uncharitable Judgment. For we find, that whilst his wealthy and honourable friends waited upon the rich man to his grave, the Angels of *G O D* waited upon the soul of the dying beggar, and carried it into *Abraham's* bosom.

II. Having shewn you the danger of making an ill use of mens calamities or afflictions; I should proceed to shew the right use that ought to be made of them. But this will be the subject of another discourse. In the mean time, that which we have already heard, may serve to caution us against making such rash and precipitate conclusions, as infer that mens guilt is always as great as their sufferings; which though in an absolute sense it be true, yet in that contracted and uncharitable sense, in which they are made,

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made, not only may be very false, but certainly are directly contrary to the true spirit and genius of the Gospel; opposite to that perfection that Christians should aspire after; aggravate and enhance the misery of those to whose share such sufferings fall; are an argument of weak and narrow minds, and highly displeasing to Almighty God.

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SERMON XV.

A G A I N S T

Rash Judgment.



S E R M O N XV.

LUKE vi. 37.

*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged ;
condemn not, and ye shall not be
condemned.*

IT is a very melancholy thing for every one that looks into the world to observe the vast variety of wretchedness that abounds therein. Calamities and distresses, both publick and private, are seen, or heard of, every day. Mens minds distracted with grief, their bodies racked with pains, their fortunes wasted and consumed ; and many that are sprung from ancestors of great distinction, reduced to the condition of the meanest of the people. Nay, it is not to be expressed or imagined, what waste is made

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in the world by wars and pestilence ; nor the miseries to which men are exposed, by famine, inundations, and earthquakes, and various other severities of Providence, that unhappy mortals are visited with. And that which strikes us most sensibly is, the observation of the miseries that appear in such various shapes and forms, to which particular persons are frequently exposed ; the obstinate and violent distempers with which some are seized ; the troubles and distractions with which their minds are tortured ; the sudden deaths with which they are surprised ; the grains of misfortunes, losses, and disasters, that many meet with all their lives long. What voracious appetites, raging passions, and brutal lusts, men are enslaved to ! What profane neglect and contempt of GOD and Religion, is every-where to be found ! What impiety and iniquity, what excess and debauchery, is notorious in all parts, and amongst all ranks of man ! When we reflect, I say, upon so much sin, and so much misery, we naturally resolve one into the other, and look upon the former as the cause, and the latter as the effect and consequent of it. And, in general, we may justly do it. But
our

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our Saviour in the text, as well as other places, has cautioned us against being too forward and precipitate in applying these general observations to the case of particular persons or places.

In discoursing upon which subject, I proposed to shew these two things :

I. The danger of making an ill use of the more severe instances of Divine Providence, or God's more extraordinary visitations, which are often to be observed in the world.

II. What the right use and improvement is, which ought to be made of them.

I. The danger of making an ill use of the more severe instances of Divine Providence, or GOD's more extraordinary visitations, which are often observed in the world. In treating upon which, I first inquired into the causes of that practice that is but too common in the world, of making bold guesses and reflections upon observing the more sharp or heavy strokes of God's Providence, and insisted upon these following ; *viz. An uncharitable disposition ; melancholy ; enthusiasm, or bigotry ; spiritual pride ; an ignorant and ill-grounded zeal ; and narrow*

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conceptions of the Nature and Providence
of God.

2. I considered the uncertainty and uncharitableness of such Judgments: which I argued, *first*, from our ignorance of God's reasons in his proceedings with men, further than such reasons are revealed to us. *Secondly*, The mistakes we are liable to fall into about real good and evil. *Thirdly*, From the assurances we have in Scripture; that *first*, such Judgments were false in several instances, in which they *were* made; and *secondly*, would have been false, had *they* been made in several other cases. 3. I then went on to vindicate the Divine Providence, in such distributions, or visitations, as seem to bear hard upon such as appear to be very worthy and righteous persons.

II. I now proceed to the *second* point which I proposed to consider, *viz.* What Judgments we should make of, or how we ought to improve, such calamities and distresses, as we observe to resemble those that in Scripture we are assured were Judgments, or Visitations, brought down upon people for their sins and provocations. Do we not find what variety of plagues the *Egyptians* were

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were visited with, either for the sins of the people, or the prince, or both?

And were not *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*, with their followers, swept away by a sudden and miraculous destruction, for their rebellion? Did not raging flames come pouring down from heaven upon *Sodom and Gomorrah*, for a punishment of those unnatural sins which cried up to heaven, and awaked the Divine vengeance; and for an example to the rest of the people about them, that should hear the story of their wickedness and ruin? Were not the *Corinthians* visited with sickness and weakness, and even death itself, for their profanation of the LORD's supper? And do we not read all over the Bible, that both particular persons, and countries in general, were visited with various kinds of losses, diseases, and deaths, for their sins and offences? How then comes it to be so uncharitable to conclude, that where we now observe the like calamities, and visitations, there must have been the like sins to provoke the Almighty. Now, in order to solve this difficulty, the following particulars may deserve to be considered.

That

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That Judgment is *G O D's strange work*; and therefore the more remarkable strokes have not frequently, but rarely, been exhibited.

And perhaps more rarely in these times than in former.

The certain interpretation of them is more difficult to us than it was while the *spirit of prophecy* was in the Church. But as to such places where the Scriptures do plainly say, that this and that sin, of any particular person or country, was the occasion of the severities to which they were exposed; it is no uncharitableness to believe it was so; because it is matter of revelation. But, had not the Scriptures affirmed it, we ought not to have been too positive in asserting it. And if we had now *Divine revelation* to assure us, we might conclude the like of the visitations of Providence in our days. But it plain from the text, and other instances, which I have mentioned, that when the Scriptures have not passed that censure, it doth not become us to do it. That there are such things as Divine Judgments it is very plain from the Scriptures, where the sword, famine, and pestilence, are expressly called

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called so ; and for the same reason may other publick calamities, such as raging flames, tempests, inundations, and the like, fall under the same denomination. And that GOD is interested and concerned in every thing that is esteemed a Judgment, is very evident ; for every calamity, whether publick or private, is determined and limited by the Providence of GOD ; both as to time, place, persons, kind, degree, and duration. It is also certain from the Scriptures, that the sins of particular persons, and publick states and societies, were visited upon them in various calamities ; and that *all these things happened unto them for ensamples ; and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*, 1 Cor. x. 11.

Nor is it to be denied, that we may use these as arguments to deter people from sin ; viz. That they have reason to fear GOD will visit their sins upon them, in this world, as well as the future, if they wilfully persist in them, and repent not sincerely of them.

We may also encourage them to go on in a course of piety and virtue, from the hopes they may justly entertain of GOD's being

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being pleased with them, and blessing them in this world, as well as the future. And whatever evil is turned from us, or whatever good is bestowed upon us, we should thank God for it, as an instance of his favour and goodness.

3. Whatever good is also taken or kept from us, or whatever evil befalls us, or seems to hang over us, it should excite us to recollect, and examine ourselves, and put us upon repenting of all our sins and transgressions. And when particular persons or countries labour under, or are afraid of, any publick calamity, we may and ought to call upon them to repentance, as the best means of either escape or deliverance. Some sins above others are threatened in the Scriptures; such as *idolatry*, *apostasy*, *profaneness*, or a general corruption of faith and manners. Since all over the Scriptures we find, that national calamities were the punishments of the sins of the people in general, or of those that stood in the most elevated stations; we may, without any trespass against Christian charity, conclude, that all such publick visitations are drawn down by mens sins; which, as the sins of *societies*, are generally or always

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ways punished in this world. But then we cannot always tell, whether they are sins of particular persons, families, or countries, of the present, or last, or former generations, for which the visitation is sent.

2. And if we could tell what sins are visited by such and such Judgments, and what particular person's sins, yet we could not, even in that case, conclude those persons to be greater sinners than others not so visited ; as we see in the case of these *Galileans*, and that of the eighteen persons on whom the tower fell. Indeed, as to the calamities that particular persons meet with, we may conclude them to be the consequences of their own personal sins, in several cases.

If there be a plain natural connexion betwixt the sin and the punishment ; so poverty is often the natural consequence of profuseness and prodigality ; many loathsome diseases are the natural consequences of mens raging and unbridled lusts ; or if a man dies in the commission of sin, as in the act of rebellion, or under the guilt of drunkenness or debauchery ; or if there be a *civil* or *judicial* connexion between, as in the
case

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case of dying by the sentence of the law, for murder, felony, or treason ; if very wicked men, whose consciences are stung with the guilt of perjury, sacrilege, murder, or any other grievous sin, be so deserted, and given up to their own fury and passion, as to lay violent hand upon themselves, as *Judas* and *Pontus Pilate* did ; we may conclude, that their sins are, and that very justly, visited : nor is it any breach of charity to draw the same conclusion, when a person is remarkably visited, after known perjury, or any horrid imprecation. We may also without any imputation of rashness conclude, that a man's sins have found him out, if there be such an exact correspondence betwixt them and the punishment, that the marks of the former are plainly seen in the latter ; as in the case of *Adonibezek*, whose thumbs, and great toes, were cut off, as he had served threescore and ten kings before ; and was therefore obliged to confess, that as he had done, so GOD had requited him ; and the burning of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, with strange fire *from* Heaven, who had offered strange fire *to* Heaven ; and in the case of *Ahah*, whose blood was licked by dogs, in
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the very place where they licked the blood of *Naboth* which he unjustly shed ; and in the case of *Hamon*, who was himself hanged upon the very gallows which he had set up for an innocent and worthy person.

But in afflictions that are more common and ordinary, or when there is not such a manifest connexion or correspondence, we cannot say that they are the visitations of God's incensed justice upon them: although they really may be so, yet we cannot, with certainty or charity, pronounce them to be so ; because we know GOD has many other ends in visiting men with afflictions, besides the punishment of their transgressions ; as our Church has observed in the office for *the visitation of the sick*. But then, neither can we with assurance say of any calamity, that it is no Judgment, or effect of GOD's displeasure, which was provoked, either by the sins of those that suffer it, or of those whose sins may be justly visited upon them. For we may add, no interval of time is sufficient to convince us, that a sin is not visited upon us. *Joseph's* brethren, almost twenty years after they had sold him, concluded, when they met with distress in *Egypt*, that
their

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their sin was the occasion of it. And the sins of youth often overtake persons in their old age. Nay, the sins of one generation are frequently visited upon another. So the destruction of *Babylon* was not effected till one hundred and seventy or two hundred years, after it was determined. And the Judgment denounced against *Jeroboam's* altar and priests was not executed for three hundred years after. There is another thing to be added, which will be evident to those, who have made any observation upon the conduct of Providence, or that are moderately acquainted with the Scripture story; and that is this: The visitation of a particular person, nay, the falling of such an one suddenly in the wars, by the hand of the enemy, may be a Judgment upon a country in general, and none upon the person himself; as in the case of *Josiah*, whose sudden death was taken as such by the people, and a publick fast appointed yearly to be observed on that account: and yet, as to himself, God was not provoked by his own sins to cut himself off; for he was well pleased with him, and gives a very extraordinary character of him. But though, upon all these considerations,

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considerations, we ought to be very cautious of judging our brethren, and concluding that they are great sinners, or greater than others, because we observe them to fall under any uncommon difficulties or distresses; yet it is safest for the persons themselves, that are visited in mind, body, estate, or reputation, to judge themselves, and inquire into the reasons of God, in such visitations: for they themselves may discover such a resemblance betwixt their sins and their sufferings, that they may have greater reason to conclude them Judgments than others, who do not know what *they* are conscious to. And this is the direction of the Church, in the exhortation before the *Communion*; *Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord.* A jealousy and suspicion of ourselves is safe and useful, to keep us humble, and so put us upon repentance and amendment. We may have reason to accuse and condemn ourselves, that the world may know nothing of. And as GOD is conscious to our guilt, as well as our own hearts, so our confessions of, and our resolutions to reform, what is amiss, must be expedient, must be necessary. Though others should not judge us,

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yet we should not flatter ourselves; for we shall be brought into Judgment at the Last Day: and then, though all the world had acquitted us, and though we had pleased ourselves with the thoughts of our innocence, yet if God have other sentiments of us, it will signify nothing, that our absolutions were pronounced by fallible men; and that we were not judged and condemned by charitable persons, who will not pass sentence without evident proofs of guilt. It were much better to be censured and condemned by all the world, and acquitted by God, and our own consciences, than to be acquitted by the world, and condemned at that awful and impartial tribunal. From the former we may appeal to the latter; but from this there lies no appeal. As the sentence is there pronounced, it shall stand, and never be reversed, till the nature of God be changed, and good become evil, and evil good.

Let us therefore examine ourselves, and enter into our own characters, and take a strict survey of our lives, and call to mind our open and secret actions and passions; and consider whether we have not reason
to

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to think God has respect to them, under his proceedings with us; of which we may better judge than any other can.

Let us consider what will be the most probable and effectual way of recovering the favour of Heaven, that we may have forfeited; whether by restitution and reconciliation; by repentance and reformation; by unfeigned sorrow, and humble confession; by undoing the evil we have done, as much as we can; and by applying ourselves in good earnest to conquer our bad habits; to restrain our violent passions; to moderate our appetites; to subdue and mortify our lusts; to bring all our views and principles, our tempers and dispositions, to a strict *examen*, and as perfect a conformity to the Nature and Will of God, as ever we are able.

Let us endeavour to make amends for all the evil we have done, and the bad example we have given; and to improve in temperance and sobriety, in meekness and humility, in justice and equity, in love and charity, in holiness and piety, in virtue and purity. And then, as others ought not, and we hope will not, judge us; so neither

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shall we fear God's entering into Judgment with us, either at present in this life, or condemning us when we at last appear at His awful tribunal.

S E R-

SERMON XVI.

ON THE

RESURRECTION.

SERMON XVI.



RESURRECTION.

S E R M O N XVI.

JOHN v. 28, 29.

The Hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth; they that have done Good unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.

GREAT and many are the privileges of the Gospel: the promises that **CHRIST** has made to those that sincerely profess his Religion, amongst others, that of the Resurrection of our bodies, at the Last Day, is worthy of all acceptance. There is no need of standing to explain the terms that are used in this article of our faith;

the Resurrection of the body. By the flesh, or the body, it is well known, that we understand that material, visible and organized part of man, which, together with his inward and invisible part, his reasonable and immortal soul, constitutes his person. And by the Resurrection of it, which supposes its dissolution, or the discontinuance of its subsistence in its present form, we understand its restitution to such a state, as that it shall again be inspired with life, and make up one part of the person of each of us, as it does at present. Nor is it necessary to insist much upon the propriety of this Resurrection ; or to shew what body shall be raised, or what subsistence shall be restored.

There were some opposers of Christianity, that, when it began to be preached, made this a question, when they heard of the doctrine of the Resurrection, *With what body shall they come?* But these were silenced by the Apostle. There have also in later ages been some who were tinctured with Scepticism, or Infidelity, although they professed Christianity, that have raised objections, and disputed with some subtilty about it. But our greatest divines, both antient and modern

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dern, have, with great consent, taught the Resurrection of the body in the plain Scripture sense. The notion that has obtained amongst them is this, *viz.* The subsistence that is interrupted by death, is by the Resurrection to be restored; that the same body and soul, which by death were separated, are, at the Resurrection, to be reunited. This they argued from the very word *Resurrection*, which implies it; and from various places of the Scriptures that assert or imply it: 1 Cor. xv. 36. *That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.* Which implies that the same grain which dies, is revived. 1 Cor. xv. 42. *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.* From which it is manifest, that the same body is the subject of different qualities, in different states, before death, and after the Resurrection. 1 Cor. xv. 53. *This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality:* as if he had extended his hand, or pointed at his mortal and corruptible body, yet living; and declared his hopes, or assurance, that the same body shall at the Last Day be raised out of the grave,
and

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and put on incorruption, and be rendered immortal. So *Rom. viii. 11. He shall quicken your mortal bodies.* What were these but the bodies with which they were cloathed at the time ; and which, though, upon the separation of their souls from them, they were to be left without life, or sense, or motion, should at last be restored to life again ? *Phil. iii. 21. He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.* From which it is evident, that these present vile bodies shall, after the Resurrection, be invested with qualities like the glorious body of our Redeemer.

In a word, all the texts that speak of the place, from which the dead shall be raised, the sea, the grave, and death ; the end for which they shall be revived, *viz.* to be judged, and to receive according to what was done in the body ; the persons that have been raised from the dead, and the condition of those that shall be found alive at the Judgment-Day ; do all concur to prove, that the same body that dies shall be raised up again. Nor will there be occasion to be long in shewing the extent or latitude of the Resurrection ; or whose bodies shall be

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raised.

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raised. As the end for which they shall be raised, shall be, to reward the persons according to what they have done in the body; whether it be good or bad; so the bodies of both just and unjust, must be raised. *Acts xxiv. 15. I have hope towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. John v. 28. The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the Resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the Resurrection of damnation.* The proof of this doctrine is only to be fetched from Revelation; without which we should not have known any thing of it. Indeed, now that it is revealed in the Scriptures, when we reflect upon it, we can by Reason shew, not only the possibility, but the great likelihood of it. There is nothing too hard for that God, by whose power it shall be effected. He that could form a human body of the dust or clay which he had first created, or produced out of nothing, is doubtless able to restore it, after it shall be moulder'd again into its original dust. He that first inspired our bodies with life, can
with

with equal ease, restore it to them, after they are deprived of it. And when we consider what a creature man is, of what he is capable, and yet of what a short continuance he is, in this state; when we consider, that numerous vegetables, and divers animals, of a rank much inferior to man, are much longer-lived than he is; there seems to be great reason to think, that this present state and life is not proportioned to his composition; but that as he is capable of, so he is designed for, a much longer duration, than this present life. A consideration this, that one of the learned bishops, formerly of this diocese, in his exposition of the *Creed*, has improved, and wrought up for this very purpose, to shew the great probability of the thing, *viz.* that we shall at last subsist in a future state; and that our subsistence there shall bear no proportion to our subsistence in the present state. He has also drawn some other considerations from the course and variations of the creatures about us, which still raise the probability, that it will be with us as it yearly is with them, which die in the winter, and are revived in the spring. But all these, and whatever else can be said upon the subject,
can

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can amount to no more than to shew, that it implies no contradiction ; and that it is extremely probable and likely so to prove. The certainty of it is to be argued from other topicks, and not from nature or reason, barely considered as such. Nothing short of the exprefs revelations of God's will and design can give us any assurance of it ; and therefore it is from the Scriptures that we must draw our proofs of this doctrine. And the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the promises and threats of the New, and the examples or instances that we have in both, are sufficient to ground our faith and expectations upon.

Our Church has so applied a passage in the book of *Job*, that it is plain she takes it to be a declaration of the hopes of that Patriarch, that his vile body was at the last to be raised up, *and that in his flesh he should see God.* Job xiv. 25, 26. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.* The promises in the New Testament are many and exprefs : what can be more so than *John* vi.

54. *Whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day?* As to the perſons that have actually been raiſed from the dead, there were divers, both before and ſince the appearance of our Saviour in the fleſh. The ſon of the widow of *Zarephath*, raiſed by the prophet *Elijah*, 1 Kings xvii. 22. the ſon of the *Shunammite*, raiſed by his ſucceſſor *Eliſha*, 2 Kings iv. the dead man that revived when he touched the bones of the Prophet, into whoſe grave he was thrown, 2 Kings xiii. 21. And while our Saviour was upon the earth, he raiſed up the daughter of *Jairus*, Mark v. 42. He recalled to life the only ſon of a widow, as they were carrying him to his grave, *Luke* vii. 12. He called *Lazarus* out of his grave, who had lain in it ſome days, *John* xi. 39. And what was ſtill more than all this, after our LORD himſelf had been crucified, and was buried, he by his own Divine power raiſed himſelf from the dead. And as our Head is riſen, it is a pledge or aſſurance, that we, as his members, ſhall alſo be raiſed, when he ſees the fitteſt time for it. So that there is all the

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the evidence we can desire to have, for the certainty of the Resurrection.

But how comes the Resurrection then to be one of the privileges of true Christians, if those that were not sound Members, and faithful Disciples, of our Saviour, shall be raised again as well as those that were; the unjust as well as the just? There is very little difficulty in the solution of this question: it may suffice to say, that the great blessing and privilege of the Resurrection of the righteous will appear both in the manner and the consequences of it. The saints shall be raised in peace, but sinners in confusion. The former shall be raised to eternal happiness, the other to eternal misery and perdition; or, as it is expressed in the text, *they that have done good, to the Resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of damnation.*

This is a subject that affords matter for pious and practical reflections:

1. As this doctrine is an argument of a future state, so it shews what interest the very bodies of the righteous have, in the benefits of CHRIST's death. It is a manifest proof of a future state, without which
there

there would be no use of a Resurrection. The bodies of men are to be raised, that they may receive in that state; *according to what they have done in the body* in this state. And it is also a proof of the interest and share that the bodies of Christians have in the redemption that CHRIST has wrought out for them. They are at present the temples of the Holy Ghost. The sacred symbols of the body and blood of CHRIST, received in the holy sacrament, are received into their bodies, and intermingled with them; and by this means they become “one
 “ with CHRIST, and CHRIST with them;
 “ they dwell in CHRIST, and CHRIST
 “ in them :” their bodies are in some sense, fed with the body of CHRIST; and are to be considered as pertaining to, and mingled with, his body, as one flesh with him, in just construction, in due time to be raised up, and glorified with himself. They that receive as they ought, are thereby so intimately united with him, do so adhere to him as parts or members of his body, that as He is risen, so shall they rise; as He is, so shall they be glorified.

To

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To this purpose hear the words of the Church, in the *homily* upon the sacrament;
“ In the supper of the LORD there is no
“ vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue
“ figure of a thing absent ; but as the Scrip-
“ ture saith, the table of the LORD, the
“ bread and cup of the LORD, the memory
“ of CHRIST, the annunciation of his
“ death, yea, the communion of the body
“ and blood of the LORD, in a marvellous
“ incorporation, which by the operation of
“ the Holy Ghost (the very bond of our
“ conjunction with CHRIST) ; is, through
“ faith, wrought in the souls of the faith-
“ ful ; whereby not only their souls live to
“ eternal life ; but they surely trust to win
“ their bodies to a Resurrection to immor-
“ tality.”

This is a consideration that should possess us with a great reverence for our very Bodies, in which the Holy Spirit dwells : our bodies, into which we have received the most sacred and venerable symbols in the whole world, and which are converted into part of their substance. When therefore we so treat these Bodies, as to debauch them, and to kindle impure flames, and raise lewd

ferments in them; we act most inconsistently, most absurdly; we do not only debase part of our own substance to vile purposes, but we desecrate and unhallow the temples of God's Spirit; we most vilely expose the Body of our LORD, received under the holy symbols. What a contradiction to all reason and *decorum* must it be, first to receive the Body of CHRIST into our bodies, and thereby become one with him; and afterwards prostitute the same bodies to vile lusts, and sensual and sinful pleasures, directly contrary to the solemn engagements which we laid ourselves under at the holy table? or first to sink our bodies into a resemblance of the brutes; and then to hope, that they shall be raised up, and made like the glorious Body of the blessed and holy JESUS?

2. This is a doctrine that may serve to comfort us under the loss of our friends; and shews us how proper and expedient it must be, to take a decent care of their remains. We should not bewail the loss of them, and sorrow as those that have no hope; for they are deposited in their original dust, for a little time; but must at last be awaked again, raised out of the earth, and rendered spiritual,
and

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and fit to live for ever in that pure air, where no gross and unclean thing can enter. And as these very bodies of our friends may in one sense be said to have been redeemed by our LORD, as they have been washed in the laver of regeneration, and so consecrated to *Him*, and his body has been incorporated with them, and they still continue to be related to our Saviour, and his blessed Spirit, nothing can be more decent and fit, than to take care of them, and commit them to the earth with all that pious and devout solemnity that our excellent Church has provided. This doctrine also inspires us with the comfortable hopes of meeting again with our parents, or children, or friends, that are dead in the LORD. Have we been (as who has not), or shall we be deprived of, or separated from, our friends or relations, by death? We are to consider, that those that die in the LORD shall be raised up at the Last Day, when we shall meet each other again, to our endless joy: which should excite us to live in the fear of GOD, that we may die in his favour, and rest in his peace, and be awaked at last by his power, and

live with them in his eternal and everlasting glory.

3. This doctrine is matter of great comfort to good Christians, and of equal terror to wicked men. Those that are truly penitent find no such consolation in any other Religion, as Christianity affords: for it promises Remission, Sanctification, and a Resurrection to life eternal, to those that labour, and are heavy laden, with the weight of their sins. Whatever they are for nature, for number; whatever be the circumstances that enhance and aggravate them; yet if we loath and abhor them, renounce and forsake them, confess them, and implore the Divine pardon for them, through the prevailing merits and intercession of our Redeemer; it speaks peace to our consciences, and opens the gates of Grace and Glory to us. But hardened and habitual sinners would chuse to be of any other Religion rather than the Christian; because so long as they retain any kindness and affection for their sins, so long as they persist in them, and are not sensible of the want of a Saviour and Redeemer, it makes *them* no promises, it gives
them

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them no hopes. They are not qualified for that comfort which it administers, to all that are in proper and suitable dispositions for it. As the promise of a Resurrection to life is made to the former, so the other are encouraged to expect nothing but a Resurrection to eternal damnation.

4. This doctrine calls upon us to rise from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness; and arms us against the fear of death. It must become them that have such expectations as these, of a glorious Resurrection, to live suitably to them; and so to treat the bodies that are to be so much interested therein, as to make them helps, and not hindrances, of that piety and virtue that we ought to cultivate, to prepare us for it. When we think seriously of the matter, we must conclude it to be very absurd, that those bodies, which, in this state, were indulged in the sensualities that are proper to the brutes, should, in the future state, be made like unto the glorious body of our LORD. What relation can there be betwixt such a body, and our blessed LORD? What respect can *He* have for the dust into which it is resolved? He cannot indeed look

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upon it as the dust into which the bodies of brutes are reduced; because they acted according to their nature and principles, which could not rise above sense: but men were enlightened with reason; and if they had prepared themselves for it, might have been illuminated with further knowlege, by revelation; and therefore by living like animals, void of reason, they debased themselves; they acted a lye; they lived not up to their order: and how absurd must it be to think, that by *his mighty power* CHRIST should raise up those bodies, and make them like his own! But if we endeavour to live like CHRIST, we may hope to be raised up in his likeness. Then may we look down into the grave with joy, knowing, that as our souls shall not lie down in it, so our bodies at last shall be raised out of it, and again inspired with our souls; and both our souls and bodies shall be made for ever happy, in God's eternal and everlasting glory, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Now to GOD, &c.

SERMON XVII.

To Fear G O D,

A N D

Keep his COMMANDMENTS,

T H E

Whole Duty of Man.



S E R M O N XVII.

E C C L. xii. 13.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

KING Solomon is said to have wrote this book as a retractation of all his errors, for a caution and direction to others in the same and future ages. He had observed, that there were two things which seemed to promise men happiness, and which in their own nature were very different, and often very opposite, *viz.* the concerns of the world, and the business of religion. Upon the due consideration of both, he gives the preference to the latter; and the sum of the argument is this: either the satisfactions of this world,
or

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or the comforts of religion, are the principal supports and happiness of mankind; but the former cannot be so, and therefore nothing but the latter can be depended upon.

I will consider,

I. *First*, The *premises*, to which *the whole matter* here in the text relates.

And then,

II. *Secondly*, The *conclusion* which he draws from them.

I. *First*, I am to consider the *premises*, &c.

He gives us a large detail of such temporal things as promise men happiness with most assurance, and which will always be found in the end only to flatter and deceive their expectations. He runs through all the stages and stations of human life, from the birth to the grave, and from the peasant to the prince. He considers all human affairs and attainments, abstracted from that true virtue and wisdom that is inspired from above, and finds them vain and delusory, unable to make men truly content and happy. He had passed through infancy, childhood, and

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and youth, and pronounces them to be vanity. So necessitous and dependent is their condition, so volatile and inconstant is their temper, so weak and shallow is their understanding, that they neither seem sensible of, nor very solicitous about, their true happiness. And when he advanced to riper years, he made every day, and in every state, fresh experiments of the vanity and emptiness of every thing that was purely human or secular. He tried the power of mirth, and gave a loose to pleasure; but this was vanity. *He said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?* What true and solid comfort is there in it? He gave himself to wine, with the delicious pleasures of which so many in all ages have been enchanted; but this also he found to be a vain and empty satisfaction. He made himself great works, he builded houses, and planted vineyards, gardens, and orchards, which abounded with all kinds of fruit; he made pools of water, to distribute juice and refreshment to them; but all was vanity. He had a noble retinue to attend him, answerable to his exalted station. His herds and flocks were not to be numbered. He excelled in wealth and riches all the
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kings of the earth. He entertained himself with vocal and instrumental music of all kinds. *Whatever his eyes desired, he kept not from them; he withheld not his heart from any joy.*—And then he paused and reflected upon the whole: And what was the censure he passed upon it? Why, *all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.* Moreover, his wisdom and knowledge exalted him above all competition: none before, none after him, ever arrived at that pitch of natural wisdom and science to which he attained. His authority and power was of vast extent, *1 Kings iv. 21.* He reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the *Philistines*, and border of *Egypt*: *They brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.*

Now, what was there wanting, which the world could furnish out to complete this man's felicity? And yet in all this he could find no such thing. They are, indeed, great conveniencies and blessings, with religion and the fear of God, but can make no man happy without it. They are great and
bountiful

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bountiful gifts of the Divine Providence, necessary for our comfort and well-being whilst we are in the body, and sojourn in this world; and we ought to be thankful for them, and to do all the good we can with them: but when they are laid in the balance with the fear of God, and obedience to his laws, they appear to be light and empty. When they are taken without religion, or stand in opposition to it, they are not able to make us as happy as God intended we should be. They add to our felicity if we be religious, but will sooner or later disappoint our confidence if we live not in the fear of God.

And this vanity that he found in them is argued, *first*, from their unsuitableness to the principal part of our constitution. It is granted that they are adapted to the wants of our bodies, and are provided by the bountiful Author of nature for the gratification of each of our senses; but as to the entertainment of our souls, and replenishing their faculties and capacities, we may as well offer to quench our thirst with honour, and satisfy our hunger with gold, as to gratify the desires of the soul with such sensual pleasures

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as those, to which the things of this world administer.

2dly, They are not only defective, as they extend not to the desires and inclinations of our souls; but they also very often prove vain reliefs to us under our bodily pressures. All that is to be expected from them is good attendance, and fitting medicines: but, alas! how often do men fall into such distempers, as will not yield to the power of art! And their largest possessions and greatest honours will not cheer their drooping spirits, assuage their pain, or compound with death for a day, or an hour.

3dly, Their instability and uncertainty is an argument of their vanity. There is nothing in this world but what (even when we are as sure of it as we can be) we may be intirely deprived of by any one of ten thousand misfortunes: for, as *Solomon* observes, *Prov. xxiii. 5. Riches make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven.* And *St. Paul* says, *1 Cor. vii. 31. The fashion of this world passeth away*: like a scene, it is presently changed, and vanishes like a cloud, or a vapour, almost as soon as it appears. But if the things
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of this world were ever so certain to continue with us, yet, alas! nothing is more uncertain than our stay with them. The daily instances of mortality may convince us, that neither riches or knowlege, youth or vigour, nor any thing else, can deliver us from death. When it receives its commission from GOD to arrest us, all the power and art in the world cannot prevent its execution. Besides, as the wise man argues, all these things are common to good and bad. *No man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him; all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.* Therefore, since the greatest blessings of this world are no certain tokens of the love of GOD, or the real goodness of those that enjoy them, we can never pronounce them happy on account

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count of their being plentifully accommodated with them.—Thus he convinceth himself, and thus endeavours to convince others, of the insufficiency of any thing this world affords for the true content and happiness of mankind.

Let us now see whether Religion bids any fairer for this purpose; and whether it yields more suitable and sufficient, more certain and unmixed, comfort and satisfaction.

And, *first*, the suitability of that pleasure which Religion affords, is evident to every one that considers the nature of man, and the nature of Religion itself. Man is a creature compounded of flesh and spirit, body and soul, related at once to the present material world, and also to the world of spirits, that, to us, is yet to succeed it. He is created with various faculties and capacities, various appetites, passions, and desires, which it is the business of Religion first to regulate, then to gratify and entertain. It is religion that makes us resemble the saints and angels, and that makes this world like *paradise*. Conversation with God, and the contemplation of the greatest and loftiest subjects of creation and providence, of grace and

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and redemption; the adoration of GOD, from whom the whole creation received its birth, and on whom it depends for its existence; these, I say, are entertainments perfectly adapted to the nature of those immortal souls, with which we are inspired.

Secondly, They are not only suitable, but also sufficient for our happiness. There is none of that emptiness that is found in all earthly goods; they do not desert us when we stand in most need of their support. The more perfect the habits of religion are, the less we shall depend upon any thing but GOD, that overflowing Fountain, that boundless Ocean of goodness and love, of purity and perfection. Religion replenishes all the capacities of our souls, and has no defects but such as are owing to the imperfection and degeneracy of our nature, which it is always restoring, improving, and rendering like, and still more like, to GOD, and our blessed Saviour.

Thirdly, They are stable and certain. It recommends the choice that *Mary* made in the Gospel, before the cumbersome things that engaged the attention of her sister *Martha*; that her part was such as no man, no

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time, no accident, no events or circumstances whatever, could take from her. They follow us in all places, and are too strong for death itself to wrest from us. When every thing else deserts us, the supports of religion never fail us. *Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can hurt us, so long as we are truly devoted to GOD and CHRIST, and walk in the ways of religion. In the multitude of sorrows that overtake and assault us in this vale of tears, the comforts of heaven refresh and support the soul that is upright with GOD. When we are in trouble, it is of the greatest consequence to receive good advice and direction. Now religion furnishes us plentifully with this; it gives us the most useful and plain instructions with regard to our duty, and informs us what we are to do, or forbear, to meet with GOD's acceptance. To those that are in darkness it exhibits a marvellous light, shewing them all things necessary to their salvation. Nor does religion only give us this light and direction, but, above all things, cheers us with the*

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good tidings it brings us; that, as to the present, GOD is with us, and will hear and help us; and, as to the future, it opens a glorious prospect of those things that GOD *has prepared for them that love him.* And it likewise refreshes us with the promises of the aids of Divine Grace, to *establish, strengthen, settle us.*

Finally, Religion animates us with the joyous reflections resulting from the conscience of having done our duty. Let what will happen about us, we have a constant fund of pleasure and satisfaction within us, which gives us the repose and peace of mind that is preferable to all the outward felicity and prosperity that this world can furnish out.—Wherefore altho' religion is sometimes represented as a state of mortification and self-denial, of contention and warfare, of trial and tribulation; yet the main trouble and difficulty is found in the change of bad principles and habits for better. This is not always easy, forasmuch as there is a great difference betwixt obeying the impulse of sense, and the dictates of reason, betwixt a state of nature and grace; betwixt the actions and habits of mere men, and the rules and

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methods of Christianity: and to change one for the other, the worse for the better, is generally a business of some difficulty. But when once the change is effected, the new nature induced, a course of actions suitable thereto becomes easy and pleasant: so that all who have had the experience of such a change, or those who have been yet more happy in being trained up, from their first years, according to the best rules of reason, and the more perfect ways of Christianity, feel the truth of that observation, that God's *commandments are not grievous*; and have the clearest conviction of the truth of these *premises*, viz. that nothing in this world is of itself sufficient to make us happy; but that religion, without any foreign help, affords us that satisfaction that is suitable to our nature, such as is constant and durable, and, by consequence, sufficient for the felicity of the better part of man in this present life, and *the whole of man* in that which is to come.

Having thus considered the *premises* of king Solomon's argument, we come now,

II. *Secondly,*

II. Secondly, To the *conclusion* which he draws from them, *viz.* that we should *fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*

Which offers three things to our consideration;

1. The spring and principle of true Religion, *The fear of GOD.*

2. The power and practice of it, *Keeping GOD's commandments.* And,

3. The motive to persuade us to it, *This is the whole duty of man.*

First, The spring and principle of true religion is *the fear of GOD.* Fear is one of the ruling passions of human nature, upon which the consideration of the penalties and punishments of the laws of heaven is wisely intended by Providence to operate. Those, upon whom the threatenings of God's law can make no impression, are graceless and desperate, and capable of any mischief and wickedness. But there is not a better preservative against sin than the fear of GOD; insomuch that, in many places of the holy Scriptures, it is put, not only for the be-

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ginning, but for the *whole* of our religion. It consists in such an awful sense of the Divine presence and power, and of GOD's natural and moral perfections, that it will effectually restrain those that duly reflect on their ways, from either neglecting or doing any thing that will displease GOD, and will prompt them to every thing that will recommend them to his favour. What a daring and desperate thing must it be, to affront and offend Him from whom we derived our existence, and upon whom we have our continual dependence! Is not He to be feared, who is our Guardian and Governor, our Father and Creator?—But if no considerations will be strong enough to make us fear him ingenuously, if we turn our reflections upon his power and severity, his justice and terror, it must certainly extort it from us. Shall we not fear Him, whose power reaches our dearest concerns, our liberties and fortunes, our lives and our credit, our bodies and souls, and is of infinite extent and duration? Shall we not fear that GOD who can arm all nature against us, can shake the heavens with his thunder, and tear up the earth with his storms, or pour a deluge of destruction upon

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upon the world? That great GOD, who
can arrest the course of nature, and could
even strike the creation back into *nothing*?
Shall we fear the wrath of man, who can
but torment or *kill the body*, and who cannot
even do this without GOD's permission, and
shall we not fear GOD, whose power is ab-
solute and unlimited, reaches not only to
the body but also to the soul, can discharge
them both from *being*, or, what is much
worse, can expose them both to inconceivable
and incurable pain and misery? It is a sign
of true courage to fear GOD, and of the
greatest baseness and degeneracy to dare once
to offend the Almighty.—Let this suffice
to be said upon the article of *the fear of*
GOD, which is the spring and foundation of
religion; and let us proceed,

2dly, To consider the practice of it, which
consists in *keeping GOD's commandments*,
serving and obeying our Maker, to whom
our best service is due upon many and most
weighty considerations. This is the *one*
thing needful. The great obligation extends
to all reasonable creatures. Men and angels,
of how many different orders soever they
be, are subject to this one command, to

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make the law and will of GOD the rule and measure of their lives and services; to act up to the dignity and excellency of their nature; to live by reason, and employ all their gifts, and all their powers, all their time and talents, in the service, and to the honour and glory of their Creator. And surely a God of infinite purity and holiness must be the best Master we can serve: his commands must be worthy of himself to give, and of us to obey. Shall not his infinite goodness move us to repent of neglecting his service so long, and invite us to obey him hereafter with the greatest chearfulness, when we consider what things he hath already done, and is still very willing to do for us? Shall we not serve him, *whose service is perfect freedom*, promoting at once our temporal and eternal welfare? If we should be ambitious of serving an earthly prince, whose life is short, and whose reign is uncertain, who may die, or be dethroned, and rendered unable to reward our fidelity, we must needs confess it is the greatest honour for us to serve GOD, whose throne is more stable and fixed than the *everlasting hills*, who endures for ever and ever. What-
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ever motives can be thought of to engage our service to the best of men, or greatest of princes, must be infinitely stronger when urged upon us to solicit our obedience to our Maker. Piety and justice, honour and gratitude, credit and interest, both temporal and eternal, whatever can work upon our hopes or our fears, will conspire in persuading us to serve the Almighty.

There is nothing else that deserves to be put in the place of a rule for our lives and conduct, but the law of God. Our own will or passions, our own appetites or inclinations, if we resign ourselves to them, will soon involve us in those mazes and perplexities, out of which we cannot extricate or deliver ourselves. We want that wisdom and constancy which are needful and worthy to guide and direct us: and all other creatures, whatever their wisdom is, want that authority which is necessary to lay us under moral and indispensable obligations. But we are so absolutely subject to God's authority, and he is so wise, and good, and perfect, that it is our wisdom and interest to resign ourselves to the most implicit obedience to his commands; and he so loves us, and so much
consults

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consults our happiness, in conjunction with his own honour and glory, in all his precepts, that we may with the greatest assurance depend upon the most blessed consequences of it. GOD has every kind of right to our service and obedience; covenant and promise, redemption and creation, do all conspire to render the obligation thereto indispensable and absolute: nor can we live up to the dignity of our nature by following any other rule than his commandments. The laws of men oblige us only by virtue of the law of GOD. *Let every soul* (says St. Paul) *be subject to the higher powers; the powers that be are ordained of GOD:* from him they derive their authority, and, by virtue of that, they challenge our obedience. The examples of others oblige us no further than they imitate and transcribe the copy that our LORD has set them; no further than they are guided and directed by the commandments of GOD. In a word, without obedience to his commandments nothing else can determine our salvation: neither knowledge, or faith, no outward performances of fasting or abstinence, of prayers or praises, of worship or sacraments, can compensate for

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for the neglect of this obedience; *Circumcision profiteth nothing, and uncircumcision profiteth nothing, but keeping the commandments of God.* And this leads us,

Thirdly, and lastly, To consider the motive or argument, by which *Solomon* would engage us to fear and serve God, which is this, *It is the whole duty of man*: it is so, and still more, it is the whole happiness of man too. And what can be further necessary to be urged for this purpose?—The accommodations of this life indeed are to be esteemed and improved as the favours of providence; but are not to be put in the place of those things that are still more valuable, and without which all that the world affords us will prove but a vain and empty satisfaction. These things may entertain our senses, may gratify our irregular appetites, may give us credit in the world, may also answer many desirable ends and purposes; but they are defective in the main point; they cannot inspire us with that confidence in our Maker, nor render the sense of God so comfortable to us, as the fear and service of him will do. This, without wealth, would make us happy, but wealth without this

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this will never do it. 'Tis true, when both meet together in the same person, nothing but heaven can make him happier: he enjoys the blessings of fortune with ease and innocence, rejoices, like a faithful steward, in his Master's confidence, and improves and manages all to the honour of his LORD and Benefactor. But even in this case his principal satisfaction flows from the sense of having done his duty, and being at perfect peace with his Maker, having an interest in his Redeemer, and being in a state of salvation. This it is that makes it easy, that makes it a pleasure to him to think of GOD, and keep up a sacred intercourse with him, by reading and hearing his holy word, and by waiting upon him in all the offices of religion. This it is that makes temporal prosperity a joy and felicity, and sanctifies the use of the good things of this life. Nay, this it is that takes away the sting of adversity, and supports a man's spirits under want or pain.

But how great are the comforts with which it inspires him at the hour of death, when he is taking his leave of his friends, and bidding the world adieu! At this disconsolate
time,

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time, when almost every thing about him will tend to make his condition grievous and uneasy, *O well is he, and happy shall he be*, that can look back upon his life, and reflect upon the careful discharge of his duty to his Maker! then shall his soul go into the world of spirits undaunted, and appear with joy and confidence amongst the saints and angels. How chearful doth *St. Paul* look death in the face, when he reflects upon his past life! *2 Tim. iv. 6. I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*—When *Hezekiah* was sick unto death, and the prophet brought him a message from the LORD, that he must *die and not live*; what had he to bear up his spirits, but the reflection upon a well-spent life in the fear and service of GOD? Thus he addresses his Maker; *Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which was good in thy sight.*—Such reflections as these will revive the fainting spirits of expiring mortals more than

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than the richest cordials that the best skill can prepare and administer. Who then would not choose to live in the fear and service of GOD, were it but for the satisfaction of departing this life in his favour, and the hopes and assurance of a fair and favourable tryal at the righteous tribunal of GOD, of coming off with applause, and entering *into the joy of his LORD*, and being for ever entertained with the glories and felicities of heaven? What then remains but that we apply ourselves to the observation of GOD's commandments, and devote our lives to his service? And tho', in the perplexities of human affairs, we may be sometimes less able to discern the will of GOD, than disposed to perform it; yet, if in all the instances, in which it is plain, we faithfully follow it; if we are governed by it as far as we find it written in our hearts, and declared in the Scriptures, we may depend upon the Divine direction in cases more dark and doubtful, or assure ourselves that the mistakes into which we innocently fall through ignorance or uncertainty, will not be imputed to us.

To

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To conclude; Under what forms soever we court happiness, whether that of profit or pleasure, ease or exercise, honour or obscurity, &c. in whatever state or condition of human life we seek it, according to our different tastes and inclinations, we are more sure of nothing than of being disappointed, if the fear and service of GOD be neglected. All the variety of opinions that the philosophers have entertained about the principal happiness attainable in this state, are so many fallacies and delusions, further than as they coincide with that, which the divine philosopher has in this text recommended to our practice, as *the conclusion of the whole matter, viz. To fear GOD, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*

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